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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
AGE FORTY-TWO

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BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM HEINEMANN
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHATTO AND WINDUS
CASSELL AND COMPANY LIMITED, AND
LONGMANS, GREEN AND COMPANY,
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

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# THE EBB-TIDE
# WEIR OF HERMISTON
# HEATHERCAT
# THE YOUNG CHEVALIER

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

LONDON
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM HEINEMANN
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHATTO AND WINDUS:
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# THE EBB-TIDE

*A Trio and Quartette*

WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION
WITH
LLOYD OSBOURNE

*"There is a tide in the affairs of men"*

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NOTE.—*On the pronunciation of a name very frequently repeated in these pages, the reader may take for a guide:—*

"It was the schooner *Farallone*."

R. L. S.,—L. O.

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"The question here is not what it is, but what they say, and they have refused. That is what we have to think of in self-defence."

"Because my Christie Rutherford!" a thin weak voice, this generation's Cassandra in the family [illegible] "we have, and with the daring of a child, I daresay, when I've decided on a thing! That is how matters, it is a matter of fact for her, for a thing I can't:—"

"I daresay, Christie, she was not the only one." Archibald Rutherford said. "I had been wrong, there, myself. But right [illegible] I should give you credit. I have good, my dear, [illegible] and they found my grandson in [illegible]."

"Who was the other one?" Christie demanded.

By this time Archie was in the condition of a divided heart. He had some hope, himself and unreflective; he was [illegible] a thing of contempt for the principle, in a person [illegible] and here he was still [illegible] and the cobwebs and experiencing an [illegible] consistency. In whom perplexity of mind, he answered the idle question."

"Have any friend known?"

"Any friend?" she cried. "What next, I wish like to know."

"He spoke most kindly, and very," Archie insisted.

"What's this to me, any?"

"I am not going to tell you; you have only to do with that," cried Archie.

"O I have nothing to do with it!" she repeated [illegible] "Only it Christie's [illegible] upon him [illegible] upon me. That I have nothing to do with it! Very like it [illegible] Did you call the [illegible] conversation? [illegible] to me [illegible] you with a [illegible] your confidence: But as you say, Mr Weir, most kindly, most considerately, I have nothing to do with it, and I'll better be going. [illegible] I'll be calling you good evening, Mr Weir." And she made him a stately curtsey, standing on the side door, [illegible] [illegible] with exaggeration [illegible] of the [illegible].

Archie stood [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] him.

"Christie!" he cried, and his voice on an [illegible] "O, Christie, remember!"

She turned round upon him violently. "What do you, Christie, me for?" she [illegible] "What have I to do with me? Going to your own friend's and accusations!" [illegible]

He made no reply but [illegible] "Christie!"

"Christie, indeed!" a little [illegible] "[illegible] Christie, sir." [illegible] "Miss Christie Elliott, I must have you to know, and I desire you to call me out of it." If I am not [illegible], I'll be respected, Mr Weir. I am one of the best people, and I'll be respected. What have I

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**Facsimile of *Weir of Hermiston*, Chapter IX**
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# CHAPTER I

## NIGHT ON THE BEACH

THROUGHOUT the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease. Some prosper, some vegetate. Some have mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies. Others, again, must marry for a livelihood; a strapping, merry, chocolate-coloured dame supports them in sheer idleness; and, dressed like natives, but still retaining some foreign element of gait or attitude, still perhaps with some relic (such as a single eye-glass) of the officer and gentleman, they sprawl in palm-leaf verandahs, and entertain an island audience with memoirs of the music-hall. And there are still others, less pliable, less capable, less fortunate, perhaps less base, who continue, even in these isles of plenty, to lack bread.

At the far end of the town of Papeete three such men were seated on the beach under a *purao* tree.



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It was late. Long ago the band had broken up and marched musically home, a motley troop of men and women, merchant-clerks and navy officers dancing in its wake, arms about waist and crowned with garlands. Long ago darkness and silence had gone from house to house about the tiny pagan city. Only the street-lamps shone on, making a glow-worm halo in the umbrageous alleys, or drawing a tremulous image on the waters of the port. A sound of snoring ran among the piles of lumber by the Government pier. It was wafted ashore from the graceful, clipper-bottomed schooners, where they lay moored close in like dinghies, and their crews were stretched upon the deck under the open sky or huddled in a rude tent amidst the disorder of merchandise.

But the men under the *purao* had no thought of sleep. The same temperature in England would have passed without remark in summer; but it was bitter cold for the South Seas. Inanimate nature knew it, and the bottle of cocoanut oil stood frozen in every bird-cage house about the island; and the men knew it, and shivered. They wore flimsy cotton clothes, the same they had sweated in by day and run the gauntlet of the tropic showers; and to complete their evil case, they had had no breakfast to mention, less dinner, and no supper at all.

In the telling South Sea phrase, these three men were *on the beach*. Common calamity had



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brought them acquainted, as the three most miserable English-speaking creatures in Tahiti; and beyond their misery, they knew next to nothing of each other, not even their true names. For each had made a long apprenticeship in going downward; and, each at some stage of the descent, had been shamed into the adoption of an *alias*. And yet not one of them had figured in a court of justice. Two were men of kindly virtues; and one, as he sat and shivered under the *purao*, had a tattered Virgil in his pocket.

Certainly, if money could have been raised upon the book, Robert Herrick would long ago have sacrificed that last possession. But the demand for literature, which is so marked a feature in some parts of the South Seas, extends not so far as the dead tongues; and the Virgil, which he could not exchange against a meal, had often consoled him in his hunger. He would study it, as he lay with tightened belt on the floor of the old calaboose, seeking favourite passages, and finding new ones only less beautiful because they lacked the consecration of remembrance. Or he would pause on random country walks, sit on the path-side, gazing over the sea, on the mountains of Eimeo, and dip into the *Æneid*, seeking *sortes*. And if the oracle (as is the way of oracles) replied with no very certain or encouraging voice, visions of England, at least, would throng upon the exile's memory,—the busy schoolroom; the green playing-fields; holidays at home, and the



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perennial roar of London; and the fireside, and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained, and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Virgil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth.

Robert Herrick was the son of an intelligent, active, and ambitious man, small partner in a considerable London house. Hopes were conceived of the boy; he was sent to a good school, gained there an Oxford scholarship, and proceeded in course to the western University. With all his talent and taste (and he had much of both) Robert was deficient in consistency and intellectual manhood, wandered in by-paths of study, worked at music or at metaphysics when he should have been at Greek, and took at last a paltry degree. Almost at the same time, the London house was disastrously wound up; Mr. Herrick must begin the world again as a clerk in a strange office, and Robert relinquish his ambitions, and accept with gratitude a career that he detested and despised. He had no head for figures, no interest in affairs, detested the constraint of hours, and despised the aims and the success of merchants. To grow rich was none of his ambitions; rather to do well. A worse or a more bold young man would have refused the



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destiny; perhaps tried his fortune with his pen; perhaps enlisted. Robert, more prudent, possibly more timid, consented to embrace that way of life in which he could most readily assist his family. But he did so with a mind divided; fled the neighbourhood of former comrades, and chose, out of several positions placed at his disposal, a clerkship in New York.

His career thenceforth was one of unbroken shame. He did not drink, he was exactly honest, he was never rude to his employers, yet was everywhere discharged. Bringing no interest to his duties, he brought no attention; his day was a tissue of things neglected and things done amiss; and from place to place, and from town to town, he carried the character of one thoroughly incompetent. No man can hear the word applied to him without some flush of colour, as indeed there is none other that so emphatically slams in a man's face the door of self-respect. And to Herrick, who was conscious of talents and acquirements, who looked down upon those humble duties in which he was found wanting, the pain was the more exquisite. Early in his fall he had ceased to be able to make remittances; shortly after, having nothing but failure to communicate, he ceased writing home; and about a year before this tale begins, turned suddenly upon the streets of San Francisco by a vulgar and infuriated German Jew, he had broken the last bonds of self-respect, and upon a sudden impulse,



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changed his name, and invested his last dollar in a passage on the mail brigantine, the *City of Papeete*. With what expectation he had trimmed his flight for the South Seas, Herrick perhaps scarcely knew. Doubtless there were fortunes to be made in pearl and copra; doubtless others, not more gifted than himself, had climbed in the island world to be queens' consorts and kings' ministers. But if Herrick had gone there with any manful purpose, he would have kept his father's name; the *alias* betrayed his moral bankruptcy; he had struck his flag; he entertained no hope to reinstate himself or help his straitened family; and he came to the islands (where he knew the climate to be soft, bread cheap, and manners easy) a skulker from life's battle and his own immediate duty. Failure, he had said, was his portion; let it be a pleasant failure.

It is fortunately not enough to say, "I will be base." Herrick continued in the islands his career of failure; but in the new scene, and under the new name, he suffered no less sharply than before. A place was got, it was lost in the old style. From the long-suffering of the keepers of restaurants, he fell to more open charity upon the wayside; as time went on, good-nature became weary, and, after a repulse or two, Herrick became shy. There were women enough who would have supported a far worse and a far uglier man; Herrick never met or never knew them; or if he did both, some manlier feeling



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would revolt, and he preferred starvation. Drenched with rains, broiling by day, shivering by night, a disused and ruinous prison for a bedroom, his diet begged or pilfered out of rubbish heaps, his associates two creatures equally outcast with himself, he had drained for months the cup of penitence. He had known what it was to be resigned, what it was to break forth in a childish fury of rebellion against fate, and what it was to sink into the coma of despair. The time had changed him. He told himself no longer tales of an easy and perhaps agreeable declension; he read his nature otherwise; he had proved himself incapable of rising, and he now learned by experience that he could not stoop to fall. Something that was scarcely pride or strength, that was perhaps only refinement, withheld him from capitulation; but he looked on upon his own misfortune with a growing rage, and sometimes wondered at his patience.

It was now the fourth month completed, and still there was no change or sign of change. The moon, racing through a world of flying clouds of every size and shape and density, some black as inkstains, some delicate as lawn, threw the marvel of her Southern brightness over the same lovely and detested scene,—the island mountains crowned with the perennial island cloud, the embowered city studded with rare lamps, the masts in the harbour, the smooth mirror of the lagoon, and the mole of the barrier-reef on which the



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breakers whitened. The moon shone, too, with bull's-eye sweeps, on his companions,—on the stalwart frame of the American who called himself Brown, and was known to be a master-mariner in some disgrace; and on the dwarfish person, the pale eyes, and toothless smile of a vulgar and bad-hearted cockney clerk. Here was society for Robert Herrick! The Yankee skipper was a man at least; he had sterling qualities of tenderness and resolution; he was one whose hand you could take without a blush. But there was no redeeming grace about the other, who called himself sometimes Hay and sometimes Tomkins, and laughed at the discrepancy; who had been employed in every store in Papeete, for the creature was able in his way; who had been discharged from each in turn, for he was wholly vile; who had alienated all his old employers, so that they passed him in the street as if he were a dog, and all his old comrades, so that they shunned him as they would a creditor.

Not long before, a ship from Peru had brought an influenza, and it now raged in the island, and particularly in Papeete. From all round the *purao* arose and fell a dismal sound of men coughing, and strangling as they coughed. The sick natives, with the islander's impatience of a touch of fever, had crawled from their houses to be cool, and, squatting on the shore or on the beached canoes, painfully expected the new day. Even as the crowing of cocks goes about the



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country in the night from farm to farm, accesses of coughing arose, and spread, and died in the distance, and sprang up again. Each miserable shiverer caught the suggestion from his neighbour, was torn for some minutes by that cruel ecstasy, and left spent and without voice or courage when it passed. If a man had pity to spend, Papeete Beach, on that cold night and in that infected season, was a place to spend it on. And of all the sufferers, perhaps the least deserving, but surely the most pitiable, was the London clerk. He was used to another life, to houses, beds, nursing, and the dainties of the sick-room; he lay here now, in the cold open, exposed to the gusting of the wind, and with an empty belly. He was besides infirm; the disease shook him to the vitals; and his companions watched his endurance with surprise. A profound commiseration filled them, and contended with and conquered their abhorrence. The disgust attendant on so ugly a sickness magnified this dislike; at the same time, and with more than compensating strength, shame for a sentiment so inhuman bound them the more straitly to his service; and even the evil they knew of him swelled their solicitude, for the thought of death is always least supportable when it draws near to the merely sensual and selfish. Sometimes they held him up; sometimes, with mistaken helpfulness, they beat him between the shoulders; and when the poor wretch lay back, ghastly and spent, af-



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ter a paroxysm of coughing, they would sometimes peer into his face, doubtfully exploring it for any mark of life. There is no one but has some virtue; that of the clerk was courage, and he would make haste to reassure them in a pleasantry not always decent.

"I'm all right, pals," he gasped once; "this is the thing to strengthen the muscles of the larynx."

"Well, you take the cake!" cried the captain.

"Oh, I'm good-plucked enough," pursued the sufferer, with a broken utterance; "but it do seem bloomin' 'ard to me that I should be the only party to be down with this form of vice, and the only one to do the funny business. I think one of you other parties might walk up. Tell a fellow something."

"The trouble is, we've nothing to tell, my son," returned the captain.

"I'll tell you, if you like, what I was thinking," said Herrick.

"Tell us anything," said the clerk. "I only want to be reminded that I ain't dead."

Herrick took up his parable, lying on his face, and speaking slowly and scarce above his breath; not like a man who has anything to say, but like one talking against time.

"Well, I was thinking this," he began. "I was thinking I lay on Papeete Beach one night, —all moon and squalls and fellows coughing,— and I was cold and hungry, and down in the



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mouth, and was about ninety years of age, and had spent about two hundred and twenty of them on Papeete Beach. And I was thinking I wished I had a ring to rub, or had a fairy godmother, or could raise Beelzebub. And I was trying to remember how you did it. I knew you made a ring of skulls, for I had seen that in the *Freischütz;* and that you took off your coat and turned up your sleeves, for I had seen Formes do that when he was playing Kaspar, and you could see (by the way he went about it) it was a business he had studied; and that you ought to have something to kick up a smoke and a bad smell,—I daresay a cigar might do,—and that you ought to say the Lord's Prayer backward. Well, I wondered if I could do that; it seemed rather a feat, you see. And then I wondered if I could say it forward, and I thought I did. Well, no sooner had I got to 'world without end,' than I saw an old man in a *pariu*, and with a mat under his arm, come along the beach from the town. He was rather a hard-favoured old party, and he limped and crippled, and all the time he kept coughing. At first I didn't cotton to his looks, I thought, and then I got sorry for the old soul because he coughed so hard. I remembered we had some of that cough mixture the American consul gave the captain for Hay. It never did Hay a ha'p'orth of service, but I thought it might do the old gentleman's business for him, and stood up.—'*Yorana!*' says I.—'*Yorana!*' says he.



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—'Look here,' I said, 'I've got some first-rate stuff in a bottle; it'll fix your cough,—savvy? *Harry my*,[1] and I'll measure you out a tablespoonful in the palm of my hand, for all our plate is at the banker's.' So I thought the old party came up, and the nearer he came, the less I took to him. But I had passed my word, you see."

"Wot is this bloomin' drivel?" interrupted the clerk. "It's like the rot there is in tracts."

"It's a story. I used to tell them to the kids at home," said Herrick. "If it bores you, I'll drop it."

"Oh, cut along!" returned the sick man irritably. "It's better than nothing."

"Well," continued Herrick, "I had no sooner given him the cough mixture than he seemed to straighten up and change, and I saw he wasn't a Tahitian after all, but some kind of an Arab, and had a long beard on his chin. 'One good turn deserves another,' says he. 'I am a magician out of the *Arabian Nights*, and this mat that I have under my arm is the original carpet of Mohammed Ben Somebody-or-other. Say the word and you can have a cruise upon the carpet.' 'You don't mean to say this is the Travelling Carpet?' I cried. 'You bet I do,' said he. 'You've been to America since last I read the *Arabian Nights*,' said I, a little suspicious. 'I should think so,' said he. 'Been everywhere. A man with a carpet like this isn't going to moulder

[1] Come here.



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in a semi-detached villa.' Well, that struck me as reasonable. 'All right,' I said, 'and do you mean to tell me I can get on that carpet and go straight to London, England?' I said, 'London, England,' captain, because he seemed to have been so long in your part of the world. 'In the crack of a whip,' said he. I figured up the time. —What is the difference between Papeete and London, captain?"

"Taking Greenwich and Point Venus, nine hours, odd minutes and seconds," replied the mariner.

"Well, that's about what I made it," resumed Herrick; "about nine hours. Calling this three in the morning, I made out I would drop into London about noon, and the idea tickled me immensely. 'There's only one bother,' I said, 'I haven't a copper cent. It would be a pity to go to London and not buy the morning *Standard*.' 'Oh!' said he, 'you don't realise the conveniences of this carpet. You see this pocket? You've only got to stick your hand in, and you pull it out filled with sovereigns.'"

"Double-eagles, wasn't it?" inquired the captain.

"That was what it was!" cried Herrick. "I thought they seemed unusually big, and I remember now I had to go to the money changers at Charing Cross and get English silver."

"Oh, you went there?" said the clerk. "Wot did you do? Bet you had a B.-and-S.!"



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"Well, you see, it was just as the old boy said, like the cut of a whip," said Herrick. "The one minute I was here on the beach at three in the morning, the next I was in front of the Golden Cross at midday. At first I was dazzled, and covered my eyes, and there didn't seem the smallest change; the roar of the Strand and the roar of the reef were like the same; hark to it now, and you can hear the cabs and the 'buses rolling and the streets resound! And then at last I would look about, and there was the old place and no mistake, with the statues in the square, and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and the bobbies, and the sparrows, and the hacks; and I can't tell you what I felt like. I felt like crying, I believe, or dancing, or jumping clean over the Nelson column. I was like a fellow caught up out of hell and flung down into the dandiest part of heaven. Then I spotted for a hansom with a spanking horse. 'A shilling for yourself if you're there in twenty minutes,' said I to the jarvey. He went a good pace, though, of course, it was a trifle to the carpet; and in nineteen minutes and a half I was at the door."

"What door?" asked the captain.

"Oh, a house I know of," returned Herrick.

"Bet it was a public-house!" cried the clerk —only these were not his words. "And w'y didn't you take the carpet there instead of trundling in a growler?"

"I didn't want to startle a quiet street," said



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the narrator. "Bad form. And besides, it was a hansom."

"Well, and what did you do next?" inquired the captain.

"Oh, I went in," said Herrick.

"The old folks?" asked the captain.

"That's about it," said the other, chewing a grass.

"Well, I think you are about the poorest 'and at a yarn!" cried the clerk. "Crikey, it's like *Ministering Children*. I can tell you there would be more beer and skittles about my little jaunt. I would go and have a B.-and-S. for luck. Then I would get a big ulster with astracan fur, and take my cane, and do the la-de-da down Piccadilly. Then I would go to a slap-up restaurant, and have green peas and a bottle of fizz and a chump chop—Oh! and I forgot, I'd 'ave some devilled w'itebait first, and green gooseberry tart, and 'ot coffee, and some of that form of vice in big bottles with a seal—Benedictine—that's the bloomin' nyme! Then I'd drop into a theatre, and pal on with some chappies, and do the dancing-rooms and bars and that, and wouldn't go 'ome till morning, till d'ylight doth appear. And the next d'y I'd 'ave watercresses, 'am, muffin, and fresh butter; wouldn't I just? Oh, my!"

The clerk was interrupted by a fresh attack of coughing.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what I would do,"



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said the captain. "I would have none of your fancy rigs with the man driving from the mizzen cross-trees, but a plain fore-and-aft hack cab of the highest registered tonnage. First of all, I would bring up at the market and get a turkey and a sucking-pig. Then I'd go to a wine-merchant's and get a dozen of champagne and a dozen of some sweet wine, rich and sticky and strong, something in the port or Madeira line, the best in the store. Then I'd bear up for a toy-store, and lay out twenty dollars in assorted toys for the picaninnies; and then to a confectioner's and take cakes and pies and fancy bread, and that stuff with the plums in it; and then to a news-agency, and buy all the papers—all the picture ones for the kids, and all the story papers for the old girl: about the Earl discovering himself to Anna-Mariar, and the escape of the Lady Maude from the private madhouse; and then I'd tell the fellow to drive home."

"There ought to be some syrup for the kids," suggested Herrick. "They like syrup."

"Yes, syrup for the kids, red syrup at that!" said the captain. "And those things they pull at and go pop, and have measly poetry inside. And then I tell you we'd have a Thanksgiving Day and Christmas-tree combined. Great Scott, but I would like to see the kids! I guess they would light right out of the house when they saw daddy driving up. My little Adar——"

The captain stopped sharply.



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"Well, keep it up," said the clerk.

"The damned thing is, I don't know if they aren't starving!" cried the captain.

"They can't be worse off than we are, and that's one comfort," returned the clerk. "I defy the devil to make me worse off."

It seemed as if the devil heard him. The light of the moon had been some time cut off, and they had talked in darkness. Now there was heard a roar, which drew impetuously nearer; the face of the lagoon was seen to whiten, and, before they had staggered to their feet, a squall burst in rain upon the outcasts. The rage and volume of that avalanche, one must have lived in the tropics to conceive; a man panted in its assault as he might pant under a shower-bath; and the world seemed whelmed in night and water.

They felt, groping for their usual shelter—it might be almost called their home—in the old calaboose; came drenched into its empty chambers, and lay down, three sops of humanity, on the cold coral floors. And presently, when the squall was overpassed, the others could hear in the darkness the chattering of the clerk's teeth.

"I say, you fellows," he wailed, "for God's sake, lie up and try to warm me. I'm blymed if I don't think I'll die else!"

So the three crept together into one wet mass, and lay until day came, shivering and dozing off, and continually reawakened to wretchedness by the coughing of the clerk.



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## CHAPTER II

### MORNING ON THE BEACH—THE THREE LETTERS

THE clouds were all fled, the beauty of the tropic day was spread upon Papeete; and the wall of breaking seas upon the reef, and the palms upon the islet, already trembled in the heat. A French man-of-war was going out that morning, homeward bound; she lay in the middle distance of the port, an ant-heap for activity. In the night a schooner had come in, and now lay far out, hard by the passage; and the yellow flag, the emblem of pestilence, flew on her. From up the coast a long procession of canoes headed round the point and toward the market, bright as a scarf with the many-coloured clothing of the natives and the piles of fruit. But not even the beauty and the welcome warmth of the morning, not even these naval movements so interesting to sailors and to idlers, could engage the attention of the outcasts. They were still cold at heart, their mouths sour from the want of sleep, their steps rambling from the lack of food; and they strung like lame geese along the beach in a



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disheartened silence. It was towards the town they moved; towards the town whence smoke arose, where happier folk were breakfasting; and as they went, their hungry eyes were upon all sides, but they were only scouting for a meal.

A small and dingy schooner lay snug against the quay, with which it was connected by a plank. On the forward deck, under a spot of awning, five Kanakas, who made up the crew, were squatted round a basin of fried *feis*[1] and drinking coffee from tin mugs.

"Eight bells; knock off for breakfast!" cried the captain with a miserable heartiness. "Never tried this craft before; positively my first appearance; guess I'll draw a bumper house."

He came close up to where the plank rested on the grassy quay, turned his back upon the schooner, and began to whistle that lively air, "The Irish Washerwoman." It caught the ears of the Kanaka seamen like a preconcerted signal. With one accord they looked up from their meal and crowded to the ship's side, *fei* in hand, and munching as they looked. Even as a poor brown Pyrenean bear dances in the streets of English towns under his master's baton, even so, but with how much more of spirit and precision, the captain footed it in time to his own whistling, and his long morning shadow capered beyond him on the grass. The Kanakas smiled on the performance; Herrick looked on heavy-eyed,

[1] *Fei* is the hill banana.



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hunger for the moment conquering all sense of shame; and a little farther off, but still hard by, the clerk was torn by the seven devils of the influenza.

The captain stopped suddenly, appeared to perceive his audience for the first time, and represented the part of a man surprised in a private hour of pleasure.

"Hello!" said he.

The Kanakas clapped hands and called upon him to go on.

"No, *sir!*" said the captain. "No eat, no dance. Savvy?"

"Poor old man!" returned one of the crew. "Him no eat?"

"Lord, no!" said the captain. "Like-um too much eat. No got."

"All right. Me got," said the sailor. "You tome here. Plenty toffee, plenty *fei*. Nutha man him tome too."

"I guess we'll drop right in," observed the captain; and he and his companions hastened up the plank. They were welcomed on board with the shaking of hands; place was made for them about the basin; a sticky demijohn of molasses was added to the feast in honour of company, and an accordion brought from the forecastle, and significantly laid by the performer's side.

"*Ariana*,"[2] said he, lightly touching the instrument as he spoke; and he fell to on a long savoury

[2] By and by.



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*fei*, made an end of it, raised his mug of coffee, and nodded across at the spokesman of the crew. "Here's your health, old man. You're a credit to the South Pacific," said he.

With the unsightly greed of hounds they glutted themselves with the hot food and coffee; and even the clerk revived and the colour deepened in his eyes. The kettle was drained, the basin cleaned; their entertainers, who had waited on their wants throughout with the pleased hospitality of Polynesians, made haste to bring forward a dessert of island tobacco and rolls of pandanus leaf to serve as paper, and presently all sat about the dishes, puffing like Indian sachems.

"When a man 'as breakfast every day, he don't know wot it is," observed the clerk.

"The next point is dinner," said Herrick; and then with a passionate utterance: "I wish to God I was a Kanaka!"

"There's one thing sure," said the captain. "I'm about desperate. I'd rather hang than rot here much longer." And with the word he took the accordion and struck up "Home, Sweet Home."

"Oh, drop that!" cried Herrick. "I can't stand that."

"No more can I," said the captain. "I've got to play something though; got to pay the shot, my son." And he struck up "John Brown's Body" in a fine, sweet baritone; "Dandy Jim of Carolina" came next; "Rosin the Bow,"



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"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "The Beautiful Land" followed. The captain was paying his shot with usury, as he had done many a time before; many a meal had he bought with the same currency from the melodious-minded natives, always, as now, to their delight.

He was in the middle of "Fifteen Dollars in the Inside Pocket," singing with dogged energy, for the task went sore against the grain, when a sensation was suddenly to be observed among the crew.

"*Tapena Tom harry my*,"[1] said the spokesman, pointing.

And the three beach-combers, following his indication, saw the figure of a man in pyjama trousers and a white jumper approaching briskly from the town.

"That's Tapena Tom, is it?" said the captain, pausing in his music. "I don't seem to place the brute."

"We'd better cut," said the clerk. "'E's no good."

"Well," said the musician deliberately, "one can't most generally always tell. I'll try it on, I guess. Music has charms to soothe the savage Tapena, boys. We might strike it rich; it might amount to iced punch in the cabin."

"Hiced punch? Oh, my!" said the clerk. "Give him something 'ot, captain. 'Way down the Swanee River'; try that."

[1] Captain Tom is coming.



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"No, *sir!* Looks Scots," said the captain; and he struck, for his life, into "Auld Lang Syne."

Captain Tom continued to approach with the same business-like alacrity; no change was to be perceived in his bearded face as he came swinging up the plank; he did not even turn his eyes on the performer.

"We twa hae paidled in the burn
Frae morning tide till dine,"

went the song.

Captain Tom had a parcel under his arm, which he laid on the house-roof, and then, turning suddenly to the strangers, "Here, you!" he bellowed, "be off out of that!"

The clerk and Herrick stood not on the order of their going, but fled incontinently by the plank. The performer, on the other hand, flung down the instrument and rose to his full height slowly.

"What's that you say?" he said. "I've half a mind to give you a lesson in civility."

"You set up any more of your gab to me," returned the Scotsman, "and I'll show ye the wrong side of a jyle. I've heard tell of the three of ye. Ye're not long for here, I can tell ye that. The Goavernment has their eyes upon ye. They make shoart work of damned beachcombers, I'll say that for the French."

"You wait till I catch you off your ship!"



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cried the captain; and then turning to the crew, "Good-bye, you fellows!" he said. "You're gentlemen, anyway! The worst nigger among you would look better upon a quarter-deck than that filthy Scotsman."

Captain Tom scorned to reply. He watched with a hard smile the departure of his guests, and as soon as the last foot was off the plank, turned to the hands to work cargo.

The beach-combers beat their inglorious retreat along the shore; Herrick first, his face dark with blood, his knees trembling under him with the hysteria of rage. Presently, under the same *purao* where they had shivered the night before, he cast himself down, and groaned aloud, and ground his face into the sand.

"Don't speak to me, don't speak to me. I can't stand it!" broke from him.

The other two stood over him, perplexed.

"Wot can't he stand now?" said the clerk. "'Asn't he 'ad a meal? *I'm* lickin' my lips."

Herrick reared up his wild eyes and burning face. "I can't beg," he screamed, and again threw himself prone.

"This thing's got to come to an end," said the captain, with an intake of the breath.

"Looks like signs of an end, don't it?" sneered the clerk.

"He's not so far from it, and don't you deceive yourself," replied the captain.—"Well," he added in a livelier voice, "you fellows hang on



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here, and I'll go and interview my representative."

Whereupon he turned on his heel, and set off at a swinging sailor's walk towards Papeete.

It was some half-hour later when he returned. The clerk was dozing with his back against a tree; Herrick still lay where he had flung himself; nothing showed whether he slept or waked.

"See, boys!" cried the captain, with that artificial heartiness of his which was at times so painful, "here's a new idea." And he produced note-paper, stamped envelopes, and pencils, three of each. "We can all write home by the mail brigantine. The consul says I can come over to his place and ink up the addresses."

"Well, that's a start, too," said the clerk. "I never thought of that."

"It was that yarning last night about going home that put me up to it," said the captain.

"Well, 'and over," said the clerk. "I'll have a shy." And he retired a little distance to the shade of a canoe.

The others remained under the *purao*. Now they would write a word or two, now scribble it out; now they would sit biting at the pencil-end and staring seaward; now their eyes would rest on the clerk where he sat propped on the canoe, leering and coughing, his pencil racing glibly on the paper.

"I can't do it," said Herrick, suddenly. "I haven't got the heart."



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"See here," said the captain, speaking with unwonted gravity. "It may be hard to write, and to write lies at that, and God knows it is; but it's the square thing. It don't cost anything to say you're well and happy, and sorry you can't make a remittance this mail; and if you don't, I'll tell you what I think it is,—I think it's about the high-water mark of being a brute beast."

"It's easy to talk," said Herrick. "You don't seem to have written much yourself, I notice."

"What do you bring in me for?" broke from the captain. His voice was indeed scarce raised above a whisper, but emotion clanged in it. "What do you know about me? If you had commanded the finest barque that ever sailed from Portland, Maine; if you had been drunk in your berth when she struck the breakers in Fourteen Island Group, and hadn't had the wit to stay there and drown, but come on deck, and given drunken orders, and lost six lives,—I could understand your talking then! There," he said more quietly, "that's my yarn, and now you know it. It's a pretty one for the father of a family. Five men and a woman murdered. Yes, there was a woman on board, and hadn't no business to be either. Guess I sent her to hell, if there is such a place. I never dared go home again; and the wife and the little ones went to England to her father's place. I don't know what's come to them," he added, with a bitter shrug.



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"Thank you, captain," said Herrick. "I never liked you better."

They shook hands, short and hard, with eyes averted, tenderness swelling in their bosoms.

"Now, boys! to work again at lying!" said the captain.

"I'll give my father up," returned Herrick, with a writhen smile. "I'll try my sweetheart, instead, for a change of evils."

And here is what he wrote:—

"EMMA,—I have scratched out the beginning to my father, for I think I can write more easily to you. This is my last farewell to all; the last you will ever hear or see of an unworthy friend and son. I have failed in life. I am quite broken down and disgraced. I pass under a false name. You will have to tell my father that, with all your kindness. It is my own fault. I know, had I chosen, that I might have done well; and yet, I swear to you, I tried to choose. I could not bear that you should think I did not try. For I loved you all; you must never doubt me in that, you least of all. I have always unceasingly loved; but what was my love worth, and what was I worth? I had not the manhood of a common clerk. I could not work to earn you. I have lost you now, and for your sake I could be glad of it. When you first came to my father's house—do you remember those days? I want you to—you saw the best of me then, all that was good in me. Do you remember the day I took your hand and would not let it go? And the day on Battersea Bridge, when we were looking at a barge, and I began to tell you one of my silly stories, and broke off to say I loved you? That was the beginning, and now here is the end. When you have read this letter, you will go round and kiss them all good-bye—my father and mother, and the children, one by one, and poor uncle; and tell them all to forget me, and forget me yourself. Turn the key in the door; let no thought of me return; be done with the poor ghost that pretended he was a man and stole your love.



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Scorn of myself grinds in me as I write. I should tell you I am well and happy and want for nothing. I do not exactly make money, or I should send a remittance; but I am well cared for, have friends, live in a beautiful place and climate, such as we have dreamed of together, and no pity need be wasted on me. In such places, you understand, it is easy to live, and live well, but often hard to make sixpence in money. Explain this to my father, he will understand. I have no more to say; only linger, going out, like an unwilling guest. God in heaven bless you! Think of me, at the last, here, on a bright beach, the sky and sea immoderately blue, and the great breakers roaring outside on a barrier-reef, where a little isle sits green with palms. I am well and strong. It is a more pleasant way to die than if you were crowding about me on a sick-bed. And yet I am dying. This is my last kiss. Forgive, forget, the unworthy."

So far he had written; his paper was all filled, when there returned a memory of evenings at the piano, and that song, the masterpiece of love, in which so many have found the expression of their dearest thoughts: "*Einst, O Wunder!*" he added. More was not required; he knew that, in his love's heart, the context would spring up, escorted with fair images and harmony; of how all through life her name should tremble in his ears, her name be everywhere repeated in the sounds of nature; and when death came and he lay dissolved, her memory linger and thrill among his elements.

"Once, O wonder! once from the ashes of my heart
Arose a blossom——"

Herrick and the captain finished their letter about the same time; each was breathing deep,



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and their eyes met and were averted as they closed the envelopes.

"Sorry I write so big," said the captain, gruffly. "Came all of a rush, when it did come."

"Same here," said Herrick. "I could have done with a ream when I got started; but it's long enough for all the good I had to say."

They were still at the addresses when the clerk strolled up, smirking, and twirling his envelope, like a man well pleased. He looked over Herrick's shoulder.

"Hullo," he said, "you ain't writing 'ome."

"I am, though," said Herrick. "She lives with my father. Oh, I see what you mean," he added. "My real name is Herrick. No more Hay"—they had both used the same *alias*—"no more Hay than yours, I daresay."

"Clean bowled in the middle stump," laughed the clerk. "My name's 'Uish, if you want to know. Everybody has a false nyme in the Pacific. Lay you five to three the captain 'as."

"So I have, too," replied the captain, "and I've never told my own since the day I tore the title-page out of my Bowditch and flung the damned thing into the sea. But I'll tell it to you, boys. John Davis is my name. I'm Davis of the *Sea Ranger*."

"Dooce you are!" said Huish. "And what was she, a pirate or a slyver?"

"She was the fastest barque out of Portland,



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Maine," replied the captain; "and for the way I lost her, I might as well have bored a hole in her side with an auger."

"Oh, you lost her, did you?" said the clerk. "'Ope she was insured."

No answer being returned to this sally, Huish, still brimming over with vanity and conversation, struck into another subject.

"I've a good mind to read you my letter," said he. "I've a good fist with a pen when I choose, and this is a prime lark. She was a barmaid I ran across in Northampton; she was a spanking fine piece, no end of style; and we cottoned at first sight like parties in the play. I suppose I spent the chynge of a fiver on that girl. Well, I 'appened to remember her nyme, so I wrote to her, and told her 'ow I had got rich, and married a queen in the Hislands, and lived in a blooming palace. Such a sight of crammers! I must read you one bit about my opening the nigger parliament in a cocked 'at. It's really prime."

The captain jumped to his feet. "That's what you did with the paper that I went and begged for you?" he roared.

It was perhaps lucky for Huish—it was surely in the end unfortunate for all—that he was seized just then by one of his prostrating accesses of cough; his comrades would have else deserted him, so bitter was their resentment. When the fit had passed, the clerk reached out his hand,



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picked up the letter, which had fallen to the earth, and tore it into fragments, stamp and all.

"Does that satisfy you?" he asked sullenly.

"We'll say no more about it," replied Davis.



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## CHAPTER III

### THE OLD CALABOOSE—DESTINY AT THE DOOR

THE old calaboose, in which the waifs had so long harboured, is a low, rectangular enclosure of building, at the corner of a shady western avenue, and a little townward of the British consulate. Within was a grassy court, littered with wreckage and the traces of vagrant occupation. Six or seven cells opened from the court; the doors, that had once been locked on mutinous whalermen, rotting before them in the grass. No mark remained of their old destination, except the rusty bars upon the windows.

The floor of one of the cells had been little cleared; a bucket (the last remaining piece of furniture of the three caitiffs) stood full of water by the door, a half cocoa-nut shell beside it for a drinking-cup; and on some ragged ends of mat Huish sprawled asleep, his mouth open, his face deathly. The glow of the tropic afternoon, the green of sun-bright foliage, stared into that shady place through door and window; and Herrick, pacing to and fro on the coral floor, some-



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times paused, and laved his face and neck with tepid water from the bucket. His long arrears of suffering, the night's vigil, the insults of the morning, and the harrowing business of the letter, had strung him to that point when pain is almost pleasure, time shrinks to a mere point, and death and life appear indifferent. To and fro he paced like a caged brute, his mind whirling through the universe of thought and memory; his eyes, as he went, skimming the legends on the wall. The crumbling whitewash was all full of them,—Tahitian names, and French, and English, and rude sketches of ships under sail, and men at fisticuffs.

It came to him of a sudden that he too must leave upon these walls the memorial of his passage. He paused before a clean space, took the pencil out, and pondered. Vanity, so hard to dislodge, awoke in him. We call it vanity, at least; perhaps unjustly. Rather it was the bare sense of his existence prompted him; the sense of his life, the one thing wonderful, to which he scarce clung with a finger. From his jarred nerves there came a strong sentiment of coming change; whether good or ill, he could not say: change,—he knew no more; change, with inscrutable, veiled face, approaching noiseless. With the feeling came the vision of a concert-room, the rich hues of instruments, the silent audience, and the loud voice of the symphony. "Destiny knocking at the door," he thought; drew a stave



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on the plaster, and wrote in the famous phrase from the Fifth Symphony. "So," thought he, "they will know that I loved music and had classical taste. They? He, I suppose; the unknown, kindred spirit that shall come some day and read my *memor querela.* Ha, he shall have Latin too!" And he added: "*terque quaterque beati queis ante ora patrum.*"

He turned again to his uneasy pacing, but now with an irrational and supporting sense of duty done. He had dug his grave that morning; now he had carved his epitaph; the folds of the toga were composed, why should he delay the insignificant trifle that remained to do? He paused and looked long in the face of the sleeping Huish, drinking disenchantment and distaste of life. He nauseated himself with that vile countenance. Could the thing continue? What bound him now? Had he no rights? Only the obligation to go on, without discharge or furlough, bearing the unbearable? *Ich trage unerträgliches;* the quotation rose in his mind. He repeated the whole piece, one of the most perfect of the most perfect of poets; and a phrase struck him like a blow: *Du, stolzes Herz, du hast es ja gewollt.* Where was the pride of his heart? And he raged against himself, as a man bites on a sore tooth, in a heady sensuality of scorn. "I have no pride, I have no heart, no manhood," he thought, "or why should I prolong a life more shameful than the gallows? Or why should I have fallen to it? No



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pride, no capacity, no force. Not even a bandit. And to be starving here with worse than banditti —with this trivial hell-hound!" His rage against his comrade rose and flooded him, and he shook a trembling fist at the sleeper.

A swift step was audible. The captain appeared upon the threshold of the cell, panting and flushed, and with a foolish face of happiness. In his arms he carried a loaf of bread and bottles of beer; the pockets of his coat were bulging with cigars. He rolled his treasures on the floor, grasped Herrick by both hands, and crowed with laughter.

"Broach the beer!" he shouted. "Broach the beer, and glory hallelujah!"

"Beer?" repeated Huish, struggling to his feet.

"Beer it is!" cried Davis. "Beer, and plenty of it. Any number of persons can use it (like Lyon's tooth-tablet) with perfect propriety and neatness.—Who's to officiate?"

"Leave me alone for that," said the clerk. He knocked the necks off with a lump of coral, and each drank in succession from the shell.

"Have a weed?" said Davis. "It's all in the bill."

"What is up?" asked Herrick.

The captain fell suddenly grave. "I'm coming to that," said he. "I want to speak with Herrick here. You, Hay—or Huish, or whatever your name is—you take a weed and the other



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bottle, and go and see how the wind is down by the *purao*. I'll call you when you're wanted."

"Hey? Secrets? That ain't the ticket," said Huish.

"Look here, my son," said the captain, "this is business, and don't you make any mistake about it. If you're going to make trouble, you can have it in your own way and stop right here. Only get the thing right; if Herrick and I go, we take the beer. Savvy?"

"Oh, I don't want to shove my oar in," returned Huish. "I'll cut right enough. Give me the swipes. You can jaw till you're blue in the face, for what I care. I don't think it's the friendly touch; that's all." And he shambled, grumbling, out of the cell into the staring sun.

The captain watched him clear of the courtyard, then turned to Herrick.

"What is it?" asked Herrick, thickly.

"I'll tell you," said Davis. "I want to consult you. It's a chance we've got. What's that?" he cried, pointing to the music on the wall.

"What?" said the other. "Oh, that? It's music; it's a phrase of Beethoven's I was writing up. It means destiny knocking at the door."

"Does it?" said the captain, rather low, and he went near and studied the inscription; "and this French?" he asked, pointing to the Latin.

"Oh, it just means I should have been luckier if I had died at home," returned Herrick impatiently. "What is this business?"



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"Destiny knocking at the door," repeated the captain; and then, looking over his shoulder, "Well, Mr. Herrick, that's about what it comes to," he added.

"What do you mean? Explain yourself," said Herrick.

But the captain was again staring at the music. "About how long ago since you wrote up this truck?" he asked.

"What does it matter?" exclaimed Herrick. "I daresay half an hour."

"My God, it's strange!" cried Davis. "There's some men would call that accidental; not me. That—" and he drew his thick finger under the music—"that's what I call Providence."

"You said we had a chance," said Herrick.

"Yes, *sir!*" said the captain, wheeling suddenly face to face with his companion. "I did so. If you're the man I take you for, we have a chance."

"I don't know what you take me for," was the reply. "You can scarce take me too low."

"Shake hands, Mr. Herrick," said the captain. "I know you. You're a gentleman and a man of spirit. I didn't want to speak before that bummer there; you'll see why. But to you I'll rip it right out. I got a ship."

"A ship?" cried Herrick. "What ship?"

"That schooner we saw this morning off the passage."

"The schooner with the hospital flag?"



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"That's the hooker," said Davis. "She's the *Farallone*, hundred and sixty tons register, out of 'Frisco for Sydney, in California champagne. Captain, mate, and one hand all died of smallpox, same as they had round in the Paumotus, I guess. Captain and mate were the only white men; all the hands Kanakas; seems a queer kind of outfit from a Christian port. Three of them left and a cook; didn't know where they were; I can't think where they were either, if you come to that; Wiseman must have been on the booze, I guess, to sail the course he did. However, there *he* was, dead; and here were the Kanakas as good as lost. They bummed around at sea like the babes in the wood, and tumbled end-on upon Tahiti. The consul here took charge. He offered the berth to Williams; Williams had never had the smallpox and backed down. That was when I came in for the letter-paper. I thought there was something up when the consul asked me to look in again; but I never let on to you fellows, so's you'd not be disappointed. Consul tried M'Neil; scared of smallpox. He tried Capirati, that Corsican, and Leblue, or whatever his name is; wouldn't lay a hand on it; all too fond of their sweet lives. Last of all, when there wasn't nobody else left to offer it to, he offers it to me. 'Brown, will you ship captain and take her to Sydney?' says he. 'Let me choose my own mate and another white hand,' says I, 'for I don't hold with this Kanaka crew



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racket; give us all two months' advance to get our clothes and instruments out of pawn, and I'll take stock to-night, fill up stores, and get to sea to-morrow before dark!' That's what I said. 'That's good enough,' says the consul; 'and you can count yourself damned lucky, Brown,' says he. And he said it pretty meaningful-appearing, too. However, that's all one now. I'll ship Huish before the mast,—of course I'll let him berth aft; and I'll ship you mate at seventy-five dollars and two months' advance."

"Me mate? Why, I'm a landsman!" cried Herrick.

"Guess you've got to learn," said the captain. "You don't fancy I'm going to skip and leave you rotting on the beach, perhaps? I'm not that sort, old man. And you're handy, anyway; I've been shipmates with worse."

"God knows I can't refuse," said Herrick. "God knows I thank you from my heart."

"That's all right," said the captain. "But it ain't all." He turned aside to light a cigar.

"What else is there?" asked the other, with a pang of indefinable alarm.

"I'm coming to that," said Davis, and then paused a little. "See here," he began, holding out his cigar between his finger and thumb, "suppose you figure up what this'll amount to. You don't catch on? Well, we get two months' advance; we can't get away from Papeete—our



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creditors wouldn't let us go—for less. It'll take us along about two months to get to Sydney; and when we get there—I just want to put it to you squarely: What the better are we?"

"We're off the beach, at least," said Herrick.

"I guess there's a beach at Sydney," returned the captain; "and I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Herrick—I don't mean to try. No, *sir!* Sydney will never see me."

"Speak out plain," said Herrick.

"Plain Dutch," replied the captain, "I'm going to own that schooner. It's nothing new; it's done every year in the Pacific. Stephens stole a schooner the other day, didn't he? Hayes and Pease stole vessels all the time. And it's the making of the crowd of us. See here, you think of that cargo. Champagne! Why, it's like as if it was put up on purpose. In Peru, we'll sell that liquor off at the pier-head, and the schooner after it, if we can find a fool to buy her, and then light out for the mines. If you'll back me up, I'll stake my life I'll carry it through."

"Captain," said Herrick, with a quailing voice, "don't do it!"

"I'm desperate," returned Davis. "I've got a chance; I may never get another. Herrick, say the word; back me up. I think we've starved together long enough for that."

"I can't do it. I'm sorry. I can't do it. I've not fallen as low as that," said Herrick, deadly pale.



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"What did you say this morning?" said Davis. "That you couldn't beg? It's the one thing or the other, my son."

"Ah, but this is the jail!" cried Herrick. "Don't tempt me. It's the jail."

"Did you hear what the skipper said on board that schooner?" pursued the captain. "Well, I tell you he talked straight. The French have let us alone a long time; it can't last longer. They've got their eye on us and as sure as you live, in three weeks you'll be in jail, whatever you do. I read it in the consul's face."

"You forget, captain," said the young man. "There is another way. I can die; and to say truth, I think I should have died three years ago."

The captain folded his arms and looked the other in the face. "Yes," said he, "yes, you can cut your throat; that's a frozen fact. Much good may it do you! And where do I come in?"

The light of a strange excitement came in Herrick's face. "Both of us," said he, "both of us together. It's not possible you can enjoy this business. Come," and he reached out a timid hand, "a few strokes in the lagoon—and rest!"

"I tell you, Herrick, I'm 'most tempted to answer you the way the man does in the Bible, and say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan!'" said the captain. "What! you think I would go drown myself, and I got children starving? Enjoy it?



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No, by God! I do not enjoy it; but it's the row I've got to hoe, and I'll hoe it till I drop right here. I have three of them, you see, two boys and the one girl, Adar. The trouble is that you are not a parent yourself. I tell you, Herrick, I love you," the man broke out. "I didn't take to you at first, you were so Anglified and tony, but I love you now; it's a man that loves you stands here and wrestles with you. I can't go to sea with the bummer alone; it's not possible. Go drown yourself, and there goes my last chance,—the last chance of a poor, miserable beast earning a crust to feed his family. I can't do nothing but sail ships, and I've no papers. And here I get a chance, and you go back on me! Ah, you've no family, and that's where the trouble is!"

"I have indeed," said Herrick.

"Yes, I know," said the captain, "you think so. But no man's got a family till he's got children. It's only the kids count. There's something about the little shavers—I can't talk of them. And if you thought a cent about this father that I hear you talk of, or that sweetheart you were writing to this morning, you would feel like me. You would say, 'What matter laws, and God, and that? My folks are hard up; I belong to them. I'll get them bread, or, by God! I'll get them wealth, if I have to burn down London for it.' That's what you would say. And I'll tell you more: your heart is saying so



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this living minute. I can see it in your face. You're thinking, 'Here's poor friendship for the man I've starved along of; and as for the girl that I set up to be in love with, here's a mighty limp kind of a love that won't carry me as far as 'most any man would go for a demijohn of whisky.' There's not much *ro*mance to that love, anyway; it's not the kind they carry on about in song books. But what's the good of my carrying on talking, when it's all in your inside as plain as print? I put the question to you once for all. Are you going to desert me in my hour of need—you know if I've deserted you—or will you give me your hand, and try a fresh deal, and go home (as like as not) a millionaire? Say No, and God pity me! Say Yes, and I'll make the little ones pray for you every night on their bended knees. 'God bless Mr. Herrick!' that's what they'll say, one after the other, the old girl sitting there holding stakes at the foot of the bed and the damned little innocents——" He broke off. "I don't often rip out about the kids," he said, "but when I do, there's something fetches loose."

"Captain," said Herrick, faintly, "is there nothing else?"

"I'll prophesy if you like," said the captain, with renewed vigour. "Refuse this because you think yourself too honest, and before a month's out you'll be jailed for a sneak-thief. I give you the word fair. I can see it, Herrick,



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if you can't; you're breaking down. Don't think, if you refuse this chance, that you'll go on doing the evangelical; you're about through with your stock, and before you know where you are, you'll be right out on the other side. No, it's either this for you, or else it's Caledonia. I bet you never were there, and saw those white, shaved men, in their dust-clothes and straw hats, prowling around in gangs in the lamplight at Noumea; they look like wolves, and they look like preachers, and they look like the sick. Huish is a daisy to the best of them. Well, there's your company. They're waiting for you, Herrick, and you got to go; and that's a prophecy."

And as the man stood and shook through his great stature, he seemed, indeed, like one in whom the spirit of divination worked and might utter oracles. Herrick looked at him and looked away; it seemed not decent to spy upon such agitation, and the young man's courage sank.

"You talk of going home," he objected. "We could never do that."

"*We* could," said the other. "Captain Brown couldn't, nor Mr. Hay that shipped mate with him couldn't. But what's that to do with Captain Davis or Mr. Herrick, you galoot?"

"But Hayes had these wild islands where he used to call," came the next, fainter objection.

"We have the wild islands of Peru," retorted Davis. "They were wild enough for Stephens



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no longer agone than just last year. I guess they'll be wild enough for us."

"And the crew?"

"All Kanakas. Come, I see you're right, old man. I see you'll stand by." And the captain once more offered his hand.

"Have it your own way, then," said Herrick. "I'll do it. A strange thing for my father's son. But I'll do it. I'll stand by you, man, for good or evil."

"God bless you!" cried the captain, and stood silent. "Herrick," he added, with a smile, "I believe I'd have died in my tracks if you'd have said No."

And Herrick, looking at the man, half-believed so also.

"And now we'll go break it to the bummer," said Davis.

"I wonder how he'll take it," said Herrick.

"Him? Jump at it!" was the reply.



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## CHAPTER IV

### THE YELLOW FLAG

THE schooner *Farallone* lay well out in the jaws of the pass, where the terrified pilot had made haste to bring her to her moorings and escape. Seen from the beach, through the thin line of shipping, two objects stood conspicuous to seaward,—the little isle, on the one hand, with its palms, and the guns and batteries raised forty years before in defence of Queen Pomaré's capital; the outcast *Farallone*, upon the other, banished to the threshold of the port, rolling there to her scuppers, and flaunting the plague-flag as she rolled. A few sea-birds screamed and cried about the ship, and within easy range a man-of-war guard-boat hung off and on, and glittered with the weapons of marines. The exuberant daylight and the blinding heaven of the tropics picked out and framed the picture.

A neat boat, manned by natives in uniform, and steered by the doctor of the port, put from shore towards three of the afternoon, and pulled smartly for the schooner. The fore-sheets were heaped with sacks of flour, onions, and potatoes,



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perched among which was Huish, dressed as a foremast hand; a heap of chests and cases impeded the action of the oarsmen; and in the stern, by the left hand of the doctor, sat Herrick, dressed in a fresh rig of slops, his brown beard trimmed to a point, a pile of paper novels on his lap, and nursing the while between his feet a chronometer, for which they had exchanged that of the *Farallone*, long since run down and the rate lost.

They passed the guard-boat, exchanging hails with the boatswain's mate in charge, and drew near at last to the forbidden ship. Not a cat stirred; there was no speech of man; and the sea being exceedingly high outside, and the reef close to where the schooner lay, the clamour of the surf hung round her like the sound of battle.

"*Ohé la goëlette!*" sang out the doctor, with his best voice.

Instantly from the house, where they had been stowing away stores, first Davis and then the ragamuffin swarthy crew made their appearance.

"Hullo, Hay, that you?" said the captain, leaning on the rail. "Tell the old man to lay her alongside as if she was eggs. There's a hell of a run of sea here, and his boat's brittle."

The movement of the schooner was at that time more than usually violent. Now she heaved her side as high as a deep-sea steamer's, and showed the flashing of her copper; now she



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swung swiftly towards the boat until her scuppers gurgled.

"I hope you have sea-legs," observed the doctor. "You will require them."

Indeed, to board the *Farallone*, in that exposed position where she lay, was an affair of some dexterity. The less precious goods were hoisted roughly in; the chronometer, after repeated failures, was passed gently and successfully from hand to hand, and there remained only the more difficult business of embarking Huish. Even that piece of dead weight (shipped A. B. at eighteen dollars and described by the captain to the consul as an invaluable man) was at last hauled on board without mishap, and the doctor, with civil salutations, took his leave.

The three co-adventurers looked at each other, and Davis heaved a breath of relief.

"Now let's get this chronometer fixed," said he, and led the way into the house. It was a fairly spacious place; two staterooms and a good-sized pantry opened from the main cabin. The bulk-heads were painted white, the floor laid with wax-cloth. No litter, no sign of life remained, for the effects of the dead men had been disinfected and conveyed on shore. Only on the table, in a saucer, some sulphur burned, and the fumes set them coughing as they entered. The captain peered into the starboard stateroom, where the bed-clothes still lay tumbled in the bunk, the blanket flung back as they had flung



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it back from the disfigured corpse before its burial.

"Now, I told these niggers to tumble that truck overboard," grumbled Davis. "Guess they were afraid to lay hands on it. Well, they've hosed the place out; that's as much as can be expected, I suppose. Huish, lay on to these blankets."

"See you blooming well far enough first," said Huish, drawing back.

"What's that?" snapped the captain. "I'll tell you, my young friend, I think you make a mistake. I'm captain here."

"Fat lot I care," returned the clerk.

"That so?" said Davis. "Then you'll berth forward with the niggers! Walk right out of this cabin."

"Oh, I daresay!" said Huish. "See any green in my eye? A lark's a lark."

"Well, now, I'll explain this business, and you'll see (once for all) just precisely how much lark there is to it," said Davis. "I'm captain, and I'm going to be it. One thing of three. First, you take my orders here as cabin steward, in which case you mess with us. Or, second, you refuse, and I pack you forward, and you get as quick as the word's said. Or, third and last, I'll signal that man-of-war and send you ashore under arrest for mutiny."

"And of course I wouldn't blow the gaff? Oh, no!" replied the jeering Huish.



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"And who's to believe you, my son?" inquired the captain. "No *sir!* There ain't no larking about my captainising. Enough said. Up with these blankets."

Huish was no fool,—he knew when he was beaten; and he was no coward, either, for he stepped to the bunk, took the infected bed-clothes fairly in his arms, and carried them out of the house without a check or a tremor.

"I was waiting for the chance," said Davis to Herrick. "I needn't do the same with you, because you understand it for yourself."

"Are you going to berth here?" asked Herrick, following the captain into the stateroom, where he began to adjust the chronometer in its place at the bed-head.

"Not much!" replied he. "I guess I'll berth on deck. I don't know as I'm afraid, but I've no immediate use for confluent smallpox."

"I don't know that I'm afraid either," said Herrick. "But the thought of those two men sticks in my throat,—that captain and mate dying here, one opposite to the other. It's grim. I wonder what they said last!"

"Wiseman and Wishart?" said the captain. "Probably mighty small potatoes. That's the thing a fellow figures out for himself one way, and the real business goes quite another. Perhaps Wiseman said, 'Here, old man, fetch up the gin; I'm feeling powerful rocky.' And perhaps Wishart said, 'Oh, hell!'"



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"Well, that's grim enough," said Herrick.

"And so it is," said Davis. "There; there's that chronometer fixed. And now it's about time to up anchor and clear out."

He lit a cigar and stepped on deck.

"Here, you! What's *your* name?" he cried to one of the hands, a lean-flanked, clean-built fellow from some far western island, and of a darkness almost approaching to the African.

"Sally Day," replied the man.

"Devil it is!" said the captain. "Didn't know we had ladies on board. Well, Sally, oblige me by hauling down that rag there. I'll do the same for you another time." He watched the yellow bunting as it was eased past the cross-trees and handed down on deck. "You'll float no more on this ship," he observed. "Muster the people aft, Mr. Hay," he added, speaking unnecessarily loud. "I've a word to say to them."

It was with a singular sensation that Herrick prepared for the first time to address a crew. He thanked his stars, indeed, that they were natives. But even natives, he reflected, might be critics too quick for such a novice as himself; they might perceive some lapse from that precise and cut-and-dry English which prevails on board a ship; it was even possible they understood no other; and he racked his brain, and overhauled his reminiscences of sea romance, for some appropriate words.



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"Here, men, tumble aft!" he said at last. "Lively now! All hands aft!"

They crowded in the alleyway like sheep.

"Here they are, sir," said Herrick.

For some time the captain continued to face the stern, then turned with ferocious suddenness on the crew, and seemed to enjoy their shrinking.

"Now," he said, twisting his cigar in his mouth, and toying with the spokes of the wheel, "I'm Captain Brown. I command this ship. This is Mr. Hay, first officer. The other white man is cabin steward, but he'll stand watch and do his trick. My orders shall be obeyed smartly. You savvy, *smartly?* There shall be no growling about the *kaikai*, which will be above allowance. You'll put a handle to the mate's name, and tack on 'sir' to every order I give you. If you're smart and quick, I'll make this ship comfortable for all hands." He took the cigar out of his mouth. "If you're not," he added, in a roaring voice, "I'll make it a floating hell. Now, Mr. Hay, we'll pick watches, if you please."

"All right," said Herrick.

"You will please use 'sir' when you address me, Mr. Hay," said the captain. "I'll take the lady. Step to starboard, Sally." And then he whispered in Herrick's ear: "Take the old man."

"I'll take you, there," said Herrick.

"What's your name?" said the captain. "What's that you say? Oh, that's not English; I'll have none of your highway gibberish on my



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ship. We'll call you old Uncle Ned, because you've got no wool on the top of your head, just the place where the wool ought to grow. Step to port, Uncle. Don't you hear Mr. Hay has picked you? Then I'll take the white man. White Man, step to starboard. Now, which of you two is the cook? You? Then Mr. Hay takes your friend in the blue dungaree. Step to port, Dungaree. There! we know who we all are—Dungaree, Uncle Ned, Sally Day, White Man, and Cook. All F. F. V.'s, I guess. And now, Mr. Hay, we'll up anchor, if you please."

"For heaven's sake, tell me some of the words," whispered Herrick.

An hour later the *Farallone* was under all plain sail, the rudder hard a-port, and the cheerfully-clanking windlass had brought the anchor home.

"All clear, sir," cried Herrick, from the bow.

The captain met her with the wheel, as she bounded like a stag from her repose, trembling and bending to the puffs. The guard-boat gave a parting hail, the wake whitened and ran out; the *Farallone* was under weigh.

Her berth had been close to the pass. Even as she forged ahead, Davis slewed her for the channel between the pier-ends of the reef, the breakers sounding and whitening to either hand. Straight through the narrow band of blue she shot to seaward, and the captain's heart exulted as he felt her tremble under foot, and (looking back over the taff-rail) beheld the roofs of Pa-



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peete changing position on the shore, and the island mountains rearing higher in the wake.

But they were not yet done with the shore and the horror of the yellow flag. About midway of the pass there was a cry and a scurry; a man was seen to leap upon the rail, and, throwing his arms over his head, to stoop and plunge into the sea.

"Steady as she goes," the captain cried, relinquishing the wheel to Huish.

The next moment he was forward, in the midst of the Kanakas, belaying-pin in hand.

"Anybody else for shore?" he cried, and the savage trumpeting of his voice, no less than the ready weapon in his hand, struck fear in all. Stupidly they stared after their escaped companion, whose black head was visible upon the water, steering for the land. And the schooner meanwhile slipped like a racer through the pass, and met the long sea of the open ocean with a souse of spray.

"Fool that I was, not to have a pistol ready!" exclaimed Davis. "Well, we go to sea short-handed; we can't help that. You have a lame watch of it, Mr. Hay."

"I don't see how we are to get along," said Herrick.

"Got to," said the captain. "No more Tahiti for me."

Both turned instinctively and looked astern. The fair island was unfolding, mountain-top on



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mountain-top; Eimeo, on the port board, lifted her splintered pinnacles, and still the schooner raced to the open sea.

"Think!" cried the captain, with a gesture, "yesterday morning I danced for my breakfast, like a poodle dog."



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## CHAPTER V

### THE CARGO OF CHAMPAGNE

THE ship's head was laid to clear Eimeo to the north, and the captain sat down in the cabin with a chart, a ruler, and an epitome.

"East a half no'the," said he, raising his face from his labours. "Mr. Hay, you'll have to watch her dead reckoning. I want every yard she makes on every hair's breadth of a course. I'm going to knock a hole right straight through the Paumotus, and that's always a near touch. Now, if this southeast trade ever blew out of the southeast, which it don't, we might hope to lie within half a point of our course. Say we lie within a point of it. That'll just about weather Fakarava. Yes, sir, that's what we've got to do, if we tack for it. Brings us through this slush of little islands in the cleanest place; see?" And he showed where his ruler intersected the wide-lying labyrinth of the Dangerous Archipelago. "I wish it was night, and I could put her about right now; we're losing time and easting. Well, we'll do our best. And if we don't fetch Peru, we'll bring up to Ecuador. All one,



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I guess. Depreciated dollars down, and no questions asked. A remarkable fine institootion, the South American don."

Tahiti was already some way astern, the Diadem rising from among broken mountains; Eimeo was already close aboard, and stood black and strange against the golden splendour of the west, when the captain took his departure from the two islands, and the patent log was set.

Some twenty minutes later, Sally Day, who was continually leaving the wheel to peer in at the cabin clock, announced in a shrill cry "Fo' bell," and the cook was to be seen carrying the soup into the cabin.

"I guess I'll sit down and have a pick with you," said Davis to Herrick. "By the time I've done, it'll be dark, and we'll clap the hooker on the wind for South America."

In the cabin, at one corner of the table, immediately below the lamp, and on the lee side of a bottle of champagne, sat Huish.

"What's this? Where did that come from?" asked the captain.

"It's fizz; and it came from the after-'old, if you want to know," said Huish, and drained his mug.

"This'll never do!" exclaimed Davis, the merchant seaman's horror of breaking into cargo showing incongruously forth on board that stolen ship. "There was never any good came of games like that."



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"You byby!" said Huish. "A fellow would think (to 'ear him) we were on the square! And look 'ere, you've put this job up 'andsomely for me, 'aven't you? I'm to go on deck and steer while you two sit and guzzle, and I'm to go by a nickname, and got to call you 'sir' and 'mister.' Well, you look here, my bloke; I'll have fizz *ad lib.*, or it won't wash. I tell you that. And you know mighty well, you ain't got any man-of-war to signal now."

Davis was staggered. "I'd give fifty dollars this had never happened," he said weakly.

"Well, it *'as* 'appened, you see," returned Huish. "Try some; it's devilish good."

The Rubicon was crossed without another struggle. The captain filled a mug and drank.

"I wish it was beer," he said with a sigh. "But there's no denying it's the genuine stuff, and cheap at the money. Now, Huish, you clear out and take your wheel."

The little wretch had gained a point, and he was gay. "Ay, ay, sir," said he, and left the others to their meal.

"Pea soup!" exclaimed the captain. "Blamed if I thought I should taste pea soup again!"

Herrick sat inert and silent. It was impossible, after these months of hopeless want, to smell the rough, high-spiced sea victuals without lust, and his mouth watered with desire of the champagne. It was no less impossible to have assisted at the scene between Huish and the cap-



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tain, and not to perceive, with sudden bluntness, the gulf wherein he had fallen. He was a thief among thieves. He said it to himself. He could not touch the soup. If he had moved at all, it must have been to leave the table, throw himself overboard, and drown—an honest man.

"Here," said the captain, "you look sick, old man; have a drop of this."

The champagne creamed and bubbled in the mug; its bright colour, its lively effervescence seized his eye. "It is too late to hesitate," he thought. His hand took the mug instinctively; he drank, with unquenchable pleasure and desire of more; drained the vessel dry, and set it down with sparkling eyes.

"There is something in life after all!" he cried. "I had forgot what it was like. Yes, even this is worth while. Wine, food, dry clothes—why, they're worth dying, worth hanging for! Captain, tell me one thing: why aren't all the poor folk foot-pads?"

"Give it up," said the captain.

"They must be damned good," cried Herrick. "There's something here beyond me. Think of that calaboose! Suppose we were sent suddenly back!" He shuddered as though stung by a convulsion, and buried his face in his clutching hands.

"Here, what's wrong with you?" cried the captain. There was no reply; only Herrick's shoulders heaved so that the table was shaken.



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"Take some more of this. Here, drink this. I order you to! Don't start crying when you're out of the wood."

"I'm not crying," said Herrick, raising his face and showing his dry eyes. "It's worse than crying. It's the horror of that grave that we've escaped from."

"Come, now, you tackle your soup; that'll fix you," said Davis, kindly. "I told you you were all broken up. You couldn't have stood out another week."

"That's the dreadful part of it!" cried Herrick. "Another week, and I'd have murdered some one for a dollar! God! and I know that? And I'm still living? It's some beastly dream."

"Quietly, quietly! Quietly does it, my son. Take your pea soup. Food—that's what you want," said Davis.

The soup strengthened and quieted Herrick's nerves; another glass of wine, and a piece of pickled pork and fried banana completed what the soup began, and he was able once more to look the captain in the face.

"I didn't know I was so much run down," he said.

"Well," said Davis, "you were as steady as a rock all day; now you've had a little lunch, you'll be as steady as a rock again."

"Yes," was the reply, "I'm steady enough now, but I'm a queer kind of a first officer."

"Shucks!" cried the captain. "You've only



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got to mind the ship's course, and keep your slate to half a point. A babby could do that; let alone a college graduate like you. There ain't nothing *to* sailoring, when you come to look it in the face. And now we'll go and put her about. Bring the slate; we'll have to start our dead reckoning right away."

The distance run since the departure was read off the log by the binnacle light, and entered on the slate.

"Ready about," said the captain. "Give me the wheel, White Man, and you stand by the main-sheet. Boom tackle, Mr. Hay, please, and then you can jump forward and attend head-sails."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Herrick.

"All clear forward?" asked Davis.

"All clear, sir."

"Hard a-lee!" cried the captain. "Haul in your slack as she comes," he called to Huish. "Haul in your slack; put your back into it; keep your feet out of the coils." A sudden blow sent Huish flat along the deck, and the captain was in his place. "Pick yourself up and keep the wheel hard over!" he roared. "You wooden fool, you wanted to get killed, I guess. Draw the jib," he cried a moment later; and then to Huish, "Give me the wheel again, and see if you can coil that sheet."

But Huish stood and looked at Davis with an evil countenance. "Do you know you struck me?" said he.



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"Do you know I saved your life?" returned the other, not deigning to look at him; his eyes travelling, instead, between the compass and the sails. "Where would you have been if that boom had swung out and you bundled in the slack? No, *sir:* we'll have no more of you at the mainsheet. Seaport towns are full of main-sheet-men; they hop upon one leg, my son, what's left of them, and the rest are dead. (Set your boom tackle, Mr. Hay.) Struck you, did I? Lucky for you I did."

"Well," said Huish, slowly, "I dessay there may be somethink in that. 'Ope there is." He turned his back elaborately on the captain, and entered the house, where the speedy explosion of a champagne cork showed he was attending to his comfort.

Herrick came aft to the captain. "How is she doing now?" he asked.

"East and by no'the a half no'the," said Davis. "It's about as good as I expected."

"What'll the hands think of it?" said Herrick.

"Oh, they don't think. They ain't paid to," said the captain.

"There was something wrong, was there not, between you and——" Herrick paused.

"That's a nasty little beast; that's a biter," replied the captain, shaking his head. "But so long as you and me hang in, it don't matter."

Herrick lay down in the weather alleyway; the night was cloudless; the movement of the ship



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cradled him; he was oppressed, besides, by the first generous meal after so long a time of famine, and he was recalled from deep sleep by the voice of Davis singing out: "Eight bells!"

He rose stupidly and staggered aft, where the captain gave him the wheel.

"By the wind," said the captain. "It comes a little puffy; when you get a heavy puff, steal all you can to windward, but keep her a good full."

He stepped towards the house, paused, and hailed the forecastle. "Got such a thing as a concertina forward?" said he. "Bully for you, Uncle Ned. Fetch it aft, will you?"

The schooner steered very easy; and Herrick, watching the moon-whitened sails, was overpowered by drowsiness. A sharp report from the cabin startled him; a third bottle had been opened; and Herrick remembered the *Sea Ranger* and Fourteen Island Group. Presently the notes of the accordion sounded, and then the captain's voice:

"O honey, with our pockets full of money,
We will trip, trip, trip, we will trip it on the quay;
And I will dance with Kate, and Tom will dance with Sall,
When we're all back from South Amerikee."

So it went to its quaint air; and the watch below lingered and listened by the forward door, and Uncle Ned was to be seen in the moonlight nodding time, and Herrick smiled at the wheel, his anxieties a while forgotten. Song followed song;



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another cork exploded; there were voices raised, as though the pair in the cabin were in disagreement; and presently it seemed the breach was healed for it was now the voice of Huish that struck up, to the captain's accompaniment:—

"Up in a balloon, boys,
Up in a balloon,
All among the little stars,
And round about the moon."

A wave of nausea overcame Herrick at the wheel. He wondered why the air, the words (which were yet written with a certain knack), and the voice and accent of the singer, should all jar his spirit like a file on a man's teeth. He sickened at the thought of his two comrades drinking away their reason upon stolen wine, quarrelling and hiccupping and making up, while the doors of a prison yawned for them in the near future. "Shall I have sold my honour for nothing?" he thought; and a heat of rage and resolution glowed in his bosom,—rage against his comrades, resolution to carry through this business if it might be carried; pluck profit out of shame, since the shame at least was now inevitable; and come home, home from South America —how did the song go?—"with his pockets full of money."

"O honey, with our pockets full of money,
We will trip, trip, trip, we will trip it on the quay:"—



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so the words ran in his head, and the "honey" took on visible form; the quay rose before him, and he knew it for the lamplit Embankment, and he saw the lights of Battersea bridge bestride the sullen river. All through the remainder of his trick he stood entranced, reviewing the past. He had been always true to his love, but not always sedulous to recall her. In the growing calamity of his life, she had swum more distant, like the moon in mist. The letter of farewell, the dishonourable hope that had surprised and corrupted him in his distress, the changed scene, the sea, the night, and the music, —all stirred him to the roots of manhood. "I *will* win her," he thought and ground his teeth. "Fair or foul, what matters if I win her?"

"Fo' bell, matey. I think um fo' bell." He was suddenly recalled by these words in the voice of Uncle Ned.

"Look in at the clock, Uncle," said he. He would not look himself, from horror of the tipplers.

"Him past, matey," repeated the Hawaiian.

"So much the better for you, Uncle," he replied; and he gave up the wheel, repeating the directions as he had received them.

He took two steps forward, and remembered his dead reckoning. "How has she been heading?" he thought; and he flushed from head to foot. He had not observed, or had forgotten; here was the old incompetence; the slate must be



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filled up by guess. "Never again!" he vowed to himself in silent fury, "never again. It shall be no fault of mine if this miscarry." And for the remainder of his watch he stood close by Uncle Ned, and read the face of the compass as, perhaps, he had never read a letter from his sweetheart.

All the time, and spurring him to the more attention, song, loud talk, fleering laughter, and the occasional popping of a cork reached his ears from the interior of the house; and when the port watch was relieved at midnight, Huish and the captain appeared upon the quarter-deck with flushed faces and uneven steps, the former with bottles, the latter with the two tin mugs. Herrick silently passed them by. They hailed him in thick voices; he made no answer. They cursed him for a churl; he paid no heed, although his belly quivered with disgust and rage. He closed-to the door of the house behind him, and cast himself on a locker in the cabin—not to sleep, he thought; rather to think and to despair. Yet he had scarce turned twice on his uneasy bed before a drunken voice hailed him in the ear, and he must go on deck again to stand the morning watch.

The first evening set the model for those that were to follow. Two cases of champagne scarce lasted the four-and-twenty hours, and almost the whole was drunk by Huish and the captain. Huish seemed to thrive on the excess. He was



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never sober, yet never wholly tipsy; the food and the sea air had soon healed him of his disease, and he began to lay on flesh. But with Davis things went worse. In the drooping, unbuttoned figure that sprawled all day upon the lockers, tippling and reading novels, in the fool who made of the evening watch a public carouse on the quarter-deck, it would have been hard to recognise the vigorous seaman of Papeete roads. He kept himself reasonably well in hand till he had taken the sun and yawned and blotted through his calculations; but, from the moment he rolled up the chart, his hours were passed in slavish self-indulgence or in hoggish slumber. Every other branch of his duty was neglected, except maintaining a stern discipline about the dinner table. Again and again, Herrick would hear the cook called aft, and see him running with fresh tins, or carrying away again a meal that had been totally condemned. And the more the captain became sunk in drunkenness the more delicate his palate showed itself. Once, in the forenoon, he had a bo'sun's chair rigged over the rail, stripped to his trousers, and went overboard with a pot of paint. "I don't like the way this schooner's painted," said he, "and I'll take a turn upon her name." But he tired of it in half an hour and the schooner went on her way with an incongruous patch of colour on the stern, and the word "Farallone" part obliterated and part looking through. He re-



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fused to stand either the middle or the morning watch. It was fine-weather sailing, he said; and asked, with a laugh, "Who ever heard of the old man standing watch himself?" To the dead reckoning which Herrick still tried to keep, he would pay not the least attention nor afford the least assistance.

"What do we want of dead reckoning?" he asked. "We get the sun all right, don't we?"

"We mayn't get it always, though," objected Herrick. "And you told me yourself you weren't sure of the chronometer."

"Oh, there ain't no flies on the chronometer!" cried Davis.

"Oblige me so far, captain," said Herrick, stiffly. "I am anxious to keep this reckoning, which is a part of my duty. I do not know what to allow for current nor how to allow for it. I am too inexperienced, and I beg of you to help me."

"Never discourage zealous officer," said the captain, unrolling the chart again, for Herrick had taken him over his day's work, and while he was still partly sober. "Here it is, look for yourself; anything from west to west-no'the-west, and anyways from five to twenty-five miles. That's what the A'm'ralty chart says. I guess you don't expect to get ahead of your own Britishers?"

"I am trying to do my duty, Captain Brown," said Herrick, with a dark flush; "and I have the



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honour to inform you that I don't enjoy being trifled with."

"What in thunder do you want?" roared Davis. "Go and look at the blamed wake. If you're trying to do your duty, why don't you go and do it? I guess it's no business of mine to go and stick my head over the ship's rump. I guess it's yours. And I'll tell you what it is, my fine fellow, I'll trouble you not to come the dude over me. You're insolent; that's what's wrong with you. Don't you crowd me, Mr. Herrick, Esquire."

Herrick tore up his papers, threw them on the floor, and left the cabin.

"He's turned a bloomin' swot, ain't he?" sneered Huish.

"He thinks himself too good for his company; that's what ails Herrick, Esquire," raged the captain. "He thinks I don't understand when he comes the heavy swell. Won't sit down with us, won't he? Won't say a civil word? I'll serve the son of a gun as he deserves. By God, Huish, I'll show him whether he's too good for John Davis!"

"Easy with the names, cap'," said Huish, who was always the more sober. "Easy over the stones, my boy!"

"All right, I will. You're a good sort, Huish. I didn't take to you at first, but I guess you're right enough. Le's open another bottle," said the captain; and that day, perhaps because he



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was excited by the quarrel, he drank more recklessly, and by four o'clock was stretched insensible upon the locker.

Herrick and Huish supped alone, one after the other, opposite his flushed and snorting body. And if the sight killed Herrick's hunger, the isolation weighed so heavily on the clerk's spirit that he was scarce risen from table ere he was currying favour with his former comrade.

Herrick was at the wheel when he approached, and Huish leaned confidentially across the binnacle.

"I say, old chappie," he said, "you and me don't seem to be such pals, somehow."

Herrick gave her a spoke or two in silence; his eye, as it skirted from the needle to the luff of the foresail, passed the man by without speculation. But Huish was really dull, a thing he could support with difficulty, having no resources of his own. The idea of a private talk with Herrick, at this stage of their relations, held out particular inducements to a person of his character. Drink, besides, as it renders some men hyper-sensitive, made Huish callous; and it would almost have required a blow to make him quit his purpose.

"Pretty business, ain't it?" he continued. "Dyvis on the lush! Must say I thought you gave it 'im A-1 to-day. He didn't like it a bit; took on hawful after you were gone. ''Ere,'



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says I, "'old on, easy on the lush,' I says. "'Errick was right, and you know it. Give 'im a chanst,' I says. "'Uish,' sezee, 'don't you gimme no more of your jaw, or I'll knock your bloomin' eyes out.' Well, wot can I do, 'Errick? But I tell you, I don't 'arf like it. It looks to me like the *Sea Rynger* over again."

Still Herrick was silent.

"Do you 'ear me speak?" asked Huish, sharply. "You're pleasant, ain't you?"

"Stand away from that binnacle," said Herrick.

The clerk looked at him, long and straight and black; his figure seemed to writhe like that of a snake about to strike; then he turned on his heel, went back to the cabin, and opened a bottle of champagne. When eight bells were cried, he slept on the floor beside the captain on the locker; and of the whole starboard watch, only Sally Day appeared upon the summons. The mate proposed to stand the watch with him, and let Uncle Ned lie down. It would make twelve hours on deck, and probably sixteen; but in this fair-weather sailing, he might safely sleep between his tricks of wheel, leaving orders to be called on any sign of squalls. So far he could trust the men, between whom and himself a close relation had sprung up. With Uncle Ned he held long nocturnal conversations, and the old man told him his simple and hard story of exile, suffering, and injustice among cruel whites.



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The cook, when he found Herrick messed alone, produced for him unexpected and sometimes unpalatable dainties, of which he forced himself to eat. And one day, when he was forward, he was surprised to feel a caressing hand run down his shoulder, and to hear the voice of Sally Day crooning in his ear: "You gootch man!" He turned, and, choking down a sob, shook hands with the negrito. They were kindly, cheery, childish souls. Upon the Sunday each brought forth his separate Bible; for they were all men of alien speech, even to each other, and Sally Day communicated with his mates in English only. Each read or made-believe to read, his chapter, Uncle Ned with spectacles on nose, and they would all join together in the singing of missionary hymns. It was thus a cutting reproof to compare the islanders and the whites aboard the *Farallone*. Shame ran in Herrick's blood to remember what employment he was on, and to see these poor souls—and even Sally Day, the child of cannibals, in all likelihood a cannibal himself—so faithful to what they knew of good. The fact that he was held in grateful favour by these innocents served like blinders to his conscience, and there were times when he was inclined, with Sally Day, to call himself a good man. But the height of his favour was only now to appear. With one voice the crew protested. Ere Herrick knew what they were doing the cook was aroused, and came a willing volun-



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teer; all hands clustered about their mate with expostulations and caresses, and he was bidden to lie down and take his customary rest without alarm.

"He tell you tlue," said Uncle Ned. "You sleep. Evely man hea he do all light. Evely man he like you too much."

Herrick struggled, and gave way; choked upon some trivial words of gratitude—and walked to the side of the house, against which he leaned, struggling with emotion.

Uncle Ned presently followed him, and begged him to lie down.

"It's no use, Uncle Ned," he replied. "I couldn't sleep. I'm knocked over with all your goodness."

"Ah, no call me Uncle Ned no mo'!" cried the old man. "No my name! My name Taveeta, all-e-same Taveeta, King of Islael. Wat for he call that Hawaii? I think no savvy nothing—all-e-same Wise-a-mana."

It was the first time the name of the late captain had been mentioned, and Herrick grasped the occasion. The reader shall be spared Uncle Ned's unwieldy dialect, and learn, in less embarrassing English, the sum of what he now communicated. The ship had scarce cleared the Golden Gate before the captain and mate had entered on a career of drunkenness, which was scarcely interrupted by their malady, and only closed by death. For days and weeks they had



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encountered neither land nor ship; and, seeing themselves lost on the huge deep with their insane conductors, the natives had drunk deep of terror.

At length they made a low island, and went in; and Wiseman and Wishart landed in the boat. There was a great village, a very fine village, and plenty Kanakas in that place, but all mighty serious; and from every here and there in the back parts of the settlement, Taveeta heard the sounds of island lamentation. "I no savvy *talk* that island," said he. "I savvy hear um *cly*. I think, Hum! too many people die here!" But upon Wiseman and Wishart the significance of that barbaric keening was lost. Full of bread and drink, they rollicked along, unconcerned; embraced the girls, who had scarce energy to repel them; took up and joined (with drunken voices) in the death-wail; and at last (on what they took to be an invitation) entered under the roof of a house in which was a considerable concourse of people sitting silent. They stooped below the eaves, flushed and laughing; within a minute they came forth again with changed faces and silenced tongues; and, as the press severed to make way for them, Taveeta was able to perceive, in the deep shadow of the house, the sick man raising from his mat a head already defeatured by disease. The two tragic triflers fled without hesitation, for their boat, screaming on Taveeta to make haste. They came aboard



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with all speed of oars, raised anchor, and crowded sail upon the ship with blows and curses, and were at sea again—and again drunk—before sunset. A week after, and the last of the two had been committed to the deep. Herrick asked Taveeta where that island was, and he replied that, by what he gathered of folks' talk as they went up together from the beach, he supposed it must be one of the Paumotus. This was in itself probable enough, for the Dangerous Archipelago had been swept that year from east to west by devastating smallpox; but Herrick thought it a strange course to lie for Sydney. Then he remembered the drink.

"Were they not surprised when they made the island?" he asked.

"Wise-a-mana he say, 'Damn! what this?'" was the reply.

"Oh, that's it, then," said Herrick. "I don't believe they knew where they were."

"I think so, too," said Uncle Ned. "I think no savvy. This one mo' betta," he added, pointing to the house where the drunken captain slumbered: "Take-a-sun all-e-same."

The implied last touch completed Herrick's picture of the life and death of his two predecessors; of the prolonged, sordid, sodden sensuality as they sailed, they knew not whither, on their last cruise. He held but a twinkling and unsure belief in any future state; the thought of one of punishment, he derided; yet for him (as for all)



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there dwelt a horror about the end of the brutish man. Sickness fell upon him at the image thus called up; and when he compared it with the scene in which himself was acting, and considered the doom that seemed to brood upon the schooner, a horror that was almost superstitious fell upon him. And yet the strange thing was, he did not falter. He who had proved his incapacity in so many fields, being now falsely placed amid duties which he did not understand, without help, and, it might be said, without countenance, had hitherto surpassed expectation; and even the shameful misconduct and shocking disclosures of that night served but to nerve and strengthen him. He had sold his honour; he vowed it should not be in vain. "It shall be no fault of mine if this miscarry," he repeated. And in his heart he wondered at himself. Living rage, no doubt, supported him; no doubt, also, the sense of the last cast, of the ships burned, of all doors closed but one, which is so strong a tonic to the merely weak, and so deadly a depressant to the merely cowardly.

For some time the voyage went otherwise well. They weathered Fakarava with one board; and, the wind holding well to the southward and blowing fresh, they passed between Ranaka and Ratiu and ran some days, northeast by east-half-east, under the lee of Takume and Honden, neither of which they made. In about 14° south and between 134° and 135° west, it fell a dead calm,



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with rather a heavy sea. The captain refused to take in sail; the helm was lashed, no watch was set, and the *Farallone* rolled and banged for three days, according to observation, in almost the same place. The fourth morning, a little before day, a breeze sprang up and rapidly freshened. The captain had drunk hard the night before; he was far from sober when he was roused; and when he came on deck for the first time, at half-past eight, it was plain he had already drunk deep again at breakfast. Herrick avoided his eye, and resigned the deck, with indignation, to a man more than half-seas-over.

By the loud commands of the captain and the singing out of fellows at the ropes, he could judge from the house that sail was being crowded on the ship; relinquished his half-eaten breakfast, and came on deck again, to find the main and the jib top-sails set, and both watches and the cook turned out to hand the stay-sail. The *Farallone* lay already far over; the sky was obscured with misty scud; and from the windward an ominous squall came flying up, broadening and blackening as it rose.

Fear thrilled in Herrick's vitals. He saw death hard by, and, if not death, sure ruin; for if the *Farallone* lived through the coming squall, she must surely be dismasted. With that, their enterprise was at an end, and they themselves bound prisoners to the very evidence of their crime. The greatness of the peril and his own



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alarm sufficed to silence him. Pride, wrath, and shame raged without issue in his mind, and he shut his teeth and folded his arms close.

The captain sat in the boat to windward, bellowing orders and insults, his eyes glazed, his face deeply congested, a bottle set between his knees, a glass in his hand, half empty. His back was to the squall, and he was at first intent upon the setting of the sail. When that was done, and the great trapezium of canvas had begun to draw and to trail the lee-rail of the *Farallone* level with the foam, he laughed out an empty laugh, drained his glass, sprawled back among the lumber in the boat, and fetched out a crumpled novel.

Herrick watched him, and his indignation glowed red-hot. He glanced to windward, where the squall already whitened the near sea, and already heralded its coming with a singular and dismal sound. He glanced at the steersman, and saw him clinging to the spokes with a face of a sickly blue. He saw the crew were running to their stations without orders, and it seemed as if something broke in his brain; and the passion of anger, so long restrained, so long eaten in secret, burst suddenly loose, and filled and shook him like a sail. He stepped across to the captain, and smote his hand heavily on the drunkard's shoulder.

"You brute," he said, in a voice that tottered, "look behind you!"



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"Wha's that?" cried Davis, bounding in the boat and upsetting the champagne.

"You lost the *Sea Ranger* because you were a drunken sot," said Herrick. "Now you're going to lose the *Farallone*. You're going to drown here the same way as you drowned others, and be damned. And your daughter shall walk the streets, and your sons be thieves like their father."

For the moment, the words struck the captain white and foolish. "My God!" he cried, looking at Herrick as upon a ghost; "my God, Herrick!"

"Look behind you, then!" reiterated the assailant.

The wretched man, already partly sobered, did as he was told, and in the same breath of time leaped to his feet. "Down staysail!" he trumpeted. The hands were thrilling for the order, and the great sail came with a run, and fell half overboard among the racing foam. "Jib topsail-halyards! Let the stays'l be," he said again.

But before it was well uttered, the squall shouted aloud and fell, in a solid mass of wind and rain commingled on the *Farallone*, and she stooped under the blow, and lay like a thing dead. From the mind of Herrick reason fled; he clung in the weather rigging, exulting; he was done with life, and he gloried in the release; he gloried in the wild noises of the wind and the choking onslaught of the rain; he gloried to die so, and now, amid this coil of the elements. And



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meanwhile, in the waist, up to his knees in water, —so low the schooner lay,—the captain was hacking at the foresheet with a pocket-knife. It was a question of seconds, for the *Farallone* drank deep of the encroaching seas. But the hand of the captain had the advance. The foresail boom tore apart the last strands of the sheet, and crashed to leeward; the *Farallone* leaped up into the wind and righted; and the peak and throat halyards, which had long been let go, began to run at the same instant.

For some ten minutes more she careered under the impulse of the squall; but the captain was now master of himself and of his ship, and all danger at an end. And then, sudden as a trick-change upon the stage, the squall blew by, the wind dropped into light airs, the sun beamed forth again upon the tattered schooner; and the captain, having secured the foresail boom, and set a couple of hands to the pump, walked aft, sober, a little pale, and with the sodden end of a cigar still stuck between his teeth, even as the squall had found it. Herrick followed him. He could scarce recall the violence of his late emotions, but he felt there was a scene to go through, and he was anxious and even eager to go through with it.

The captain, turning at the house-end, met him face to face, and averted his eyes. "We've lost the two tops'ls and the stays'l," he gabbled. "Good business we didn't lose any sticks. I



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guess you think we're all the better without the kites."

"That's not what I'm thinking," said Herrick, in a voice strangely quiet, that yet echoed confusion in the captain's mind.

"I know that," he cried, holding up his hand. "I know what you're thinking. No use to say it now. I'm sober."

"I have to say it, though," returned Herrick.

"Hold on, Herrick; you've said enough," said Davis. "You've said what I would take from no man breathing but yourself; only I know it's true."

"I have to tell you, Captain Brown," pursued Herrick, "that I resign my position as mate. You can put me in irons or shoot me, as you please. I will make no resistance; only I decline in any way to help or to obey you; and I suggest you should put Mr. Huish in my place. He will make a worthy first officer to your captain, sir." He smiled, bowed, and turned to walk forward.

"Where are you going, Herrick?" cried the captain, detaining him by the shoulder.

"To berth forward with the men, sir," replied Herrick, with the same hateful smile. "I've been long enough aft here with you—gentlemen."

"You're wrong there," said Davis. "Don't you be too quick with me; there ain't nothing wrong but the drink—it's the old story, man! Let me get sober once, and then you'll see," he pleaded.



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"Excuse me, I desire to see no more of you," said Herrick.

The captain groaned aloud. "You know what you said about my children?" he broke out.

"By rote. In case you wish me to say it to you again?" asked Herrick.

"Don't!" cried the captain, clapping his hands to his ears. "Don't make me kill a man I care for! Herrick, if you see me put a glass to my lips again till we're ashore, I give you leave to put a bullet through me. I beg you to do it! You're the only man aboard whose carcass is worth losing. Do you think I don't know that? Do you think I ever went back on you? I always knew that you were in the right of it; drunk or sober, I knew that. What do you want? An oath? Man, you're clever enough to see that this is sure-enough earnest."

"Do you mean there shall be no more drinking," asked Herrick; "neither by you nor Huish? That you won't go on stealing my profits and drinking my champagne, that I gave my honour for? And that you'll attend to your duties, and stand watch and watch, and bear your proper share of the ship's work, instead of leaving it all on the shoulders of a landsman, and making yourself the butt and scoff of native seamen? Is that what you mean? If it is, be so good as to say it categorically."

"You put these things in a way hard for a gentleman to swallow," said the captain. "You



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wouldn't have me say I was ashamed of myself? Trust me this once! I'll do the square thing; and there's my hand on it."

"Well, I'll try it once," said Herrick. "Fail me again——"

"No more now!" interrupted Davis. "No more, old man! Enough said. You've a riling tongue when your back's up, Herrick. Just be glad we're friends again, the same as what I am, and go tender on the raws. I'll see as you don't repent it. We've been mighty near death this day,—don't say whose fault it was!—pretty near hell, too, I guess. We're in a mighty bad line of life, us two, and ought to go easy with each other."

He was maundering; yet it seemed as if he were maundering with some design, beating about the bush of some communication that he feared to make, or perhaps only talking against time, in terror of what Herrick might say next. But Herrick had now spat his venom. His was a kindly nature, and, content with his triumph, he had now begun to pity. With a few soothing words he sought to conclude the interview, and proposed that they should change their clothes.

"Not right yet," said Davis. "There's another thing I want to tell you first. You know what you said about my children? I want to tell you why it hit me so hard; I kind of think you'll feel bad about it, too. It's about my little Adar. You hadn't ought to have quite said that



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—but of course I know you didn't know. She —she's dead, you see."

"Why, Davis!" cried Herrick. "You've told me a dozen times she was alive! Clear your head, man! This must be the drink."

"No, *sir*," said Davis. "She's dead, right enough. Died of a bowel complaint. That was when I was away in the brig *Oregon*. She lies in Portland, Maine. 'Adar, only daughter of Captain John Davis and Mariar his wife, aged five.' I had a doll for her on board. I never took the paper off'n that doll, Herrick; it went down the way it was with the *Sea Ranger*, that day I was damned."

The captain's eyes were fixed on the horizon; he talked with an extraordinary softness, but a complete composure; and Herrick looked upon him with something that was almost terror.

"Don't think I'm crazy, neither," resumed Davis. "I've all the cold sense that I know what to do with. But I guess a man that's unhappy's like a child; and this is a kind of a child's game of mine. I never could act up to the plain-cut truth, you see. So I pretend. And I warn you square: as soon as we're through with this talk, I'll start in again with the pretending. Only, you see, she can't walk no streets," added the captain; "couldn't even make out to live and get that doll!"

Herrick laid a tremulous hand upon the captain's shoulder.



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"Don't do that!" cried Davis, recoiling from the touch. "Can't you see I'm all broken up the way it is? Come along, then; come along, old man. You can put your trust in me right through. Come along and get dry clothes."

They entered the cabin, and there was Huish on his knees, prising open a case of champagne.

"Vast there!" cried the captain. "No more of that. No more drinking on this ship."

"Turned teetotal, 'ave you?" inquired Huish. "I'm agreeable. About time, eh? Bloomin' nearly lost another ship, I fancy."—He took out a bottle, and began calmly to burst the wire with the spike of a corkscrew.

"Do you hear me speak?" cried Davis.

"I suppose I do. You speak loud enough," said Huish. "The trouble is that I don't care."

Herrick plucked the captain's sleeve. "Let him be now," said he; "we've had all we want this evening."

"Let him have it, then," said the captain. "It's his last."

By this time the wire was open, the string was cut, the head of gilded paper was torn away, and Huish waited, mug in hand, expecting the usual explosion. It did not follow. He eased the cork with his thumb; still there was no result. At last he took the screw and drew it. It came out very easy and with scarce a sound.

"'Illo!" said Huish, "'ere's a bad bottle."



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He poured some of the wine into the mug; it was colourless and still. He smelt and tasted it.

"W'y, wot's this?" he said. "It's water!"

If the voice of trumpets had suddenly sounded about the ship in the midst of the sea, the three men in the house could scarce have been more stunned than by this incident. The mug passed round; each sipped, each smelt of it; each stared at the bottle, in its glory of gold paper, as Crusoe may have stared at the footprint; and their minds were swift to fix upon a common apprehension. The difference between a bottle of champagne and a bottle of water is not great; between a shipload of one or of the other lay the whole scale from riches to ruin.

A second bottle was broached. There were two cases standing ready in a stateroom. These two were brought out, broken open, and tested; still with the same result: the contents were still colourless and tasteless, and dead as the rain in a beached fishing-boat.

"Crikey!" said Huish.

"Here, let's sample the hold!" said the captain, mopping his brow with a back-handed sweep; and the three stalked out of the house, grim and heavy-footed.

All hands were turned out: two Kanakas were sent below, another stationed at a purchase, and Davis, axe in hand, took his place beside the coaming.



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"Are you going to let the men know?" whispered Herrick.

"Damn the men!" said Davis. "It's beyond that. We've got to know ourselves."

Three cases were sent on deck and sampled in turn; from each bottle, as the captain smashed it with the axe, the champagne ran bubbling and creaming.

"Go deeper, can't you?" cried Davis to the Kanakas in the hold.

The command gave the signal for a disastrous change. Case after case came up, bottle after bottle was burst, and bled mere water. Deeper yet, and they came upon a layer where there was scarcely so much as the intention to deceive,—where the cases were no longer branded, the bottles no longer wired or papered; where the fraud was manifest, and stared them in the face.

"Here's about enough of this foolery!" said Davis. "Stow back the cases in the hold, Uncle, and get the broken crockery overboard.—Come with me," he added to his co-adventurers, and led the way back into the cabin.



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## CHAPTER VI

### THE PARTNERS

EACH took a side of the fixed table. It was the first time they had sat down at it together; but now all sense of incongruity, all memory of differences, was quite swept away by the presence of the common ruin.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, after a pause, and with very much the air of a chairman opening a board meeting, "we're sold."

Huish broke out in laughter. "Well, if this ain't the 'ighest old rig!" he cried. "And Dyvis 'ere, who thought he had got up so bloomin' early in the mornin'! We've stolen a cargo of spring-water! Oh, my crikey!" and he squirmed with mirth.

The captain managed to screw out a phantom smile.

"Here's Old Man Destiny again," said he to Herrick; "but this time I guess he's kicked the door right in."

Herrick only shook his head.

"Oh, Lord, it's rich!" laughed Huish. "It would really be a scrumptious lark if it 'ad 'ap-



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pened to somebody else. And wot are we to do next? Oh, my eye! with this bloomin' schooner, too."

"That's the trouble," said Davis. "There's only one thing certain: it's no use carting this old glass and ballast to Peru. No, *sir*, we're in a hole."

"Oh, my! and the merchant!" cried Huish; "the man that made this shipment! He'll get the news by the mail brigantine, and he'll think of course we're making straight for Sydney."

"Yes, he'll be a sick merchant," said the captain. "One thing: this explains the Kanaka crew. If you're going to lose a ship, I would ask no better myself than a Kanaka crew. But there's one thing it don't explain: it don't explain why she came down Tahiti-ways."

"W'y, to lose her, you byby!" said Huish.

"A lot you know," said the captain. "Nobody wants to lose a schooner; they want to lose her *on her course*, you skeesicks! You seem to think underwriters haven't got enough sense to come in out of the rain."

"Well," said Herrick, "I can tell you, I am afraid, why she came so far to the eastward. I had it of Uncle Ned. It seems these two unhappy devils, Wiseman and Wishart, were drunk on the champagne from the beginning, and died drunk at the end."

The captain looked on the table.

"They lay in their two bunks, or sat here in



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this damned house," he pursued, with rising agitation, "filling their skins with the accursed stuff, till sickness took them. As they sickened, and the fever rose, they drank the more. They lay here howling and groaning, drunk and dying, all in one. They didn't know where they were; they didn't care. They didn't even take the sun, it seems."

"Not take the sun!" cried the captain, looking up. "Sacred Billy! what a crowd!"

"Well, it don't matter to Joe!" said Huish. "Wot are Wiseman and the t'other buffer to us?"

"A good deal, too," said the captain. "We're their heirs, I guess."

"It is a great inheritance," said Herrick.

"Well, I don't know about that," returned Davis. "Appears to me as if it might be worse. 'T ain't what the cargo would have been, of course; at least, not money down. But I'll tell you what it appears to figure up to. Appears to me as if it amounted to about the bottom dollar of the man in 'Frisco."

"'Old on," said Huish. "Give a fellow time; 'ow's this, umpire?"

"Well, my sons," pursued the captain, who seemed to have recovered his assurance, "Wiseman and Wishart were to be paid for casting away this old schooner and its cargo. We're going to cast away the schooner right enough, and I'll make it my private business to see that we get paid. What were W. and W. to get? That's



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more'n I can tell. But W. and W. went into this business themselves; they were on the crook. Now *we're* on the square; *we* only stumbled into it; and that merchant has just got to squeal, and I'm the man to see that he squeals good. No, *sir!* there's some stuffing to this *Farallone* racket, after all."

"Go it, cap!" cried Huish. "Yoicks! Forrard! 'Old 'ard! There's your style for the money! Blow me if I don't prefer this to the hother."

"I do not understand," said Herrick. "I have to ask you to excuse me; I do not understand."

"Well now, see here, Herrick," said Davis. "I'm going to have a word with you, anyway, upon a different matter, and it's good that Huish should hear it too. We're done with this boozing business, and we ask your pardon for it right here and now. We have to thank you for all you did for us while we were making hogs of ourselves. You'll find me turn-to all right in future; and as for the wine, which I grant we stole from you, I'll take stock and see you paid for it. That's good enough, I believe. But what I want to point out to you is this. The old game was a risky game. The new game's as safe as running a Vienna bakery. We just put this *Farallone* before the wind, and run till we're well to leeward of our port of departure, and reasonably well up with some other place where they have an Amer-



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ican consul. Down goes the *Farallone*, and good-bye to her! A day or so in the boat; the consul packs us home, at Uncle Sam's expense, to 'Frisco; and if that merchant don't put the dollars down, you come to me!"

"But I thought——" began Herrick; and then broke out, "Oh, let's get on to Peru!"

"Well, if you're going to Peru for your health, I won't say no," replied the captain. "But for what other blame' shadow of a reason you should want to go there, gets me clear. We don't want to go there with this cargo. I don't know as old bottles is a lively article anywheres; leastways I'll go my bottom cent it ain't in Peru. It was always a doubt if we could sell the schooner; I never rightly hoped to, and now I'm sure she ain't worth a hill of beans. What's wrong with her, I don't know. I only know it's something, or she wouldn't be here with this truck in her inside. Then, again, if we lose her, and land in Peru, where are we? We can't declare the loss, or how did we get to Peru? In that case the merchant can't touch the insurance; most likely he'll go bust; and don't you think you see the three of us on the beach of Callao?"

"There's no extradition there," said Herrick.

"Well, my son, and we want to be extradished," said the captain. "What's our point? We want to have a consul extradish us as far as San Francisco and that merchant's office door. My idea is that Samoa would be found an eligible



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business centre. It's dead before the wind; the States have a consul there, and 'Frisco steamers call, so's we could skip right back and interview the merchant."

"Samoa?" said Herrick. "It will take us for ever to get there."

"Oh, with a fair wind!" said the captain.

"No trouble about the log, eh?" asked Huish.

"No, *sir*," said Davis. "*Light airs and baffling winds. Squalls and calms. D. R.: five miles. No obs. Pumps attended.* And fill in the barometer and thermometer off of last year's trip. 'Never saw such a voyage,' says you to the consul. 'Thought I was going to run short——'" He stopped in mid-career. "Say," he began again, and once more stopped. "Beg your pardon, Herrick," he added, with undisguised humility, "but did you keep the run of the stores?"

"Had I been told to do so, it should have been done, as the rest was done, to the best of my little ability," said Herrick. "As it was, the cook helped himself to what he pleased."

Davis looked at the table.

"I drew it rather fine, you see," he said at last. "The great thing was to clear right out of Papeete before the consul could think better of it. Tell you what: I guess I'll take stock."

And he rose from the table, and disappeared with a lamp in the lazaretto.

"'Ere's another screw loose," observed Huish.

"My man," said Herrick, with a sudden gleam



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of animosity, "it is still your watch on deck, and surely your wheel also?"

"You come the 'eavy swell, don't you, ducky?" said Huish. "Stand away from that binnacle. 'Surely your w'eel, my man.' Yah!"

He lit a cigar ostentatiously, and strolled into the waist with his hands in his pockets.

In a surprisingly short time the captain reappeared; he did not look at Herrick, but called Huish back and sat down.

"Well," he began, "I've taken stock—roughly." He paused, as if for somebody to help him out; and none doing so, both gazing on him instead with manifest anxiety, he yet more heavily resumed: "Well, it won't fight. We can't do it; that's the bed-rock. I'm as sorry as what you can be, and sorrier. But the game's up. We can't look near Samoa. I don't know as we could get to Peru."

"Wot-ju mean?" asked Huish, brutally.

"I can't 'most tell myself," replied the captain. "I drew it fine; I said I did; but what's been going on here gets me! Appears as if the devil had been around. That cook must be the holiest kind of a fraud. Only twelve days, too! Seems like craziness. I'll own up square to one thing: I seem to have figured too fine upon the flour. But the rest—my land! I'll never understand it! There's been more waste on this two-penny ship than what there is to an Atlantic Liner." He stole a glance at his companions; nothing



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good was to be gleaned from their dark faces; and he had recourse to rage. "You wait till I interview that cook!" he roared, and smote the table with his fist. "I'll interview the son of a gun as he's never been spoken to before. I'll put a bead upon the ——!"

"You will not lay a finger on the man," said Herrick. "The fault is yours, and you know it. If you turn a savage loose in your store-room, you know what to expect. I will not allow the man to be molested."

It is hard to say how Davis might have taken this defiance, but he was diverted to a fresh assailant.

"Well!" drawled Huish, "you're a plummy captain, ain't you? You're a blooming captain! Don't you set up any of your chat to me, John Dyvis. I know you now; you ain't any more use than a bloomin' dawl! Oh, you 'don't know,' don't you? Oh, it 'gets you,' do it? Oh, I dessay! W'y, weren't you 'owling for fresh tins every blessed day? 'Ow often 'ave I 'eard you send the 'ole bloomin' dinner off, and tell the man to chuck it in the swill-tub? And breakfast? Oh, my crikey! Breakfast for ten, and you 'ollerin' for more! And now you 'can't 'most tell'! Blow me if it ain't enough to make a man write an insultin' letter to Gawd! You dror it mild, John Dyvis. Don't 'andle me; I'm dyngerous."

Davis sat like one bemused; it might even have



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been doubted if he heard. But the voice of the clerk rang about the cabin like that of a cormorant among the ledges of a cliff.

"That will do, Huish," said Herrick.

"Oh, so you tyke his part, do you, you stuck-up, sneerin' snob? Tyke it, then. Come on, the pair of you! But as for John Dyvis, let him look out! He struck me the first night aboard, and I never took a blow yet but wot I gave as good. Let him knuckle down on his marrow-bones and beg my pardon; that's my last word!"

"I stand by the captain," said Herrick. "That makes us two to one, both good men; and the crew will all follow me. I hope I shall die very soon; but I have not the least objection to killing you before I go. I should prefer it so. I should do it with no more remorse than winking. Take care, take care, you little cad!"

The animosity with which these words were uttered was so marked in itself, and so remarkable in the man who uttered them, that Huish stared, and even the humiliated Davis reared up his head and gazed at his defender. As for Herrick, the successive agitations and disappointments of the day had left him wholly reckless; he was conscious of a pleasant glow, an agreeable excitement. His head seemed empty; his eyeballs burned as he turned them; his throat was dry as a biscuit. The least dangerous man by nature, except in so far as the weak are always



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dangerous, at that moment he was ready to slay or be slain, with equal unconcern.

Here, at least, was the gage thrown down, and battle offered. He who should speak next would bring the matter to an issue there and then. All knew it to be so, and hung back; and for many seconds by the cabin clock the trio sat motionless and silent.

Then came an interruption, welcome as the flowers in May.

"Land ho!" sang out a voice on deck. "Land a weatha bow!"

"Land!" cried Davis, springing to his feet. "What's this? There ain't no land here."

And, as men may run from the chamber of a murdered corpse, the three ran forth out of the house, and left their quarrel behind them, undecided.

The sky shaded down at the sea-level to the white of opal; the sea itself, insolently, inkily blue, drew all about them the uncompromising wheel of the horizon. Search it as they pleased, not even the practised eye of Captain Davis could descry the smallest interruption. A few filmy clouds were slowly melting overhead; and about the schooner, as around the only point of interest, a tropic bird, white as a snowflake, hung and circled, and displayed, as it turned, the long vermilion feather of its tail. Save the sea and the heaven, that was all.

"Who sang out land?" asked Davis. "If



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there's any boy playing funny-dog with me, I'll teach him sky-larking!"

But Uncle Ned contentedly pointed to a part of the horizon where a greenish, filmy iridescence could be discerned, floating like smoke on the pale heavens.

Davis applied his glass to it, and then looked at the Kanaka. "Call that land?" said he. "Well, it's more than I do!"

"One time, long ago," said Uncle Ned, "I see Anaa all-e-same that, four, five hours befo' we come up. Capena he say sun go down, sun go up again; he say lagoon all-e-same milla."

"All-e-same *what?*" asked Davis.

"Milla, sah," said Uncle Ned.

"Oh, ah! mirror," said Davis. "I see,—reflection from the lagoon. Well, you know, it is just possible, though it's strange I never heard of it. Here, let's look at the chart."

They went back to the cabin, and found the position of the schooner well to windward of the archipelago, in the midst of a white field of paper.

"There, you see for yourselves!" said Davis.

"And yet I don't know," said Herrick; "I somehow think there's something in it. I'll tell you one thing, too, captain: that's all right about the reflection; I heard it in Papeete."

"Fetch up that Findlay, then!" said Davis; "I'll try it all ways. An island wouldn't come amiss the way we're fixed."

The bulky volume was handed up to him,



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brokenbacked, as is the way with Findlay; and he turned to the place, and began to run over the text, muttering to himself, and turning over the pages with a wetted finger.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed; "how's this?" And he read aloud: "*New Island.* According to M. Delille, this island, which from private interests would remain unknown, lies, it is said, in lat. 12° 49′ 10″ S., long. 133° 6′ W. In addition to the position above given, Commander Matthews, H. M. S. *Scorpion*, states that an island exists in lat. 12° 0′ S., long. 133° 16′ W. This must be the same, if such an island exists, which is very doubtful, and totally disbelieved in by South Sea traders."

"Golly!" said Huish.

"It's rather in the conditional mood," said Herrick.

"It's anything you please," cried Davis, "only there it is! That's our place, and don't you make any mistake."

"'Which from private interests would remain unknown,'" read Herrick, over his shoulder. "What may that mean?"

"It should mean pearls," said Davis. "A pearling island the Government don't know about. That sounds like real estate. Or suppose it don't mean anything. Suppose it's just an island; I guess we could fill up with fish and cocoa-nuts and native stuff, and carry out the Samoa scheme hand over fist. How long did he



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say it was before they raised Anaa? Five hours, I think."

"Four or five," said Herrick.

Davis stepped to the door. "What breeze had you that time you made Anaa, Uncle Ned?" said he.

"Six or seven knots," was the reply.

"Thirty or thirty-five miles," said Davis. "High time we were shortening sail, then. If it is an island we don't want to be butting our head against it in the dark; and if it isn't an island, we can get through it just as well by daylight. Ready about!" he roared.

And the schooner's head was laid for that elusive glimmer in the sky, which began already to pale in lustre and diminish in size, as the stain of breath vanishes from a window-pane. At the same time she was reefed close down.



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# PART II
# THE QUARTETTE

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE PEARL-FISHER

ABOUT four in the morning, as the captain and Herrick sat together on the rail, there arose from the midst of the night, in front of them, the voice of breakers. Each sprang to his feet and stared and listened. The sound was continuous, like the passing of a train; no rise or fall could be distinguished; minute by minute the ocean heaved with an equal potency against the invisible isle; and as time passed, and Herrick waited in vain for any vicissitude in the volume of that roaring, a sense of the eternal weighed upon his mind. To the expert eye, the isle itself was to be inferred from a certain string of blots along the starry heaven. And the schooner was laid to and anxiously observed till daylight.

There was little or no morning bank. A brightening came in the east; then a wash of some ineffable, faint, nameless hue between crimson and silver; and then coals of fire. These glimmered a while on the sea-line, and seemed to brighten and darken and spread out; and still



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the night and the stars reigned undisturbed. It was as though a spark should catch and glow and creep along the foot of some heavy and almost incombustible wall-hanging, and the room itself be scarce menaced. Yet a little after, and the whole east glowed with gold and scarlet, and the hollow of heaven was filled with the daylight.

The isle—the undiscovered, the scarce-believed in—now lay before them and close aboard; and Herrick thought that never in his dreams had he beheld anything more strange and delicate. The beach was excellently white, the continuous barrier of trees inimitably green; the land perhaps ten feet high, the trees thirty more. Every here and there, as the schooner coasted northward, the wood was intermitted; and he could see clear over the inconsiderable strip of land (as a man looks over a wall) to the lagoon within; and clear over that again to where the far side of the atoll prolonged its pencilling of trees against the morning sky. He tortured himself to find analogies. The isle was like the rim of a great vessel sunken in the waters; it was like the embankment of an annular railway grown upon with wood: so slender it seemed amidst the outrageous breakers, so frail and pretty, he would scarce have wondered to see it sink and disappear without a sound, and the waves close smoothly over its descent.

Meanwhile the captain was in the forecross-trees, glass in hand, his eyes in every quarter,



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spying for an entrance, spying for signs of tenancy. But the isle continued to unfold itself in joints and to run out in indeterminate capes, and still there was neither house nor man nor the smoke of fire. Here a multitude of sea-birds soared and twinkled and fished in the blue waters; and there, and for miles together, the fringe of cocoa-palm and pandanus extended desolate, and made desirable green bowers for nobody to visit; and the silence of death was only broken by the throbbing of the sea.

The airs were very light, their speed was small; the heat intense. The decks were scorching underfoot; the sun flamed overhead, brazen out of a brazen sky; the pitch bubbled in the seams, and the brains in the brain-pan. And all the while the excitement of the three adventurers glowed about their bones like a fever. They whispered and nodded and pointed and put mouth to ear with a singular instinct of secrecy, approaching that island underhand, like eavesdroppers and thieves; and even Davis, from the cross-trees, gave his orders mostly by gestures. The hands shared in this mute strain, like dogs, without comprehending it; and through the roar of so many miles of breakers, it was a silent ship that approached an empty island.

At last they drew near to the break in that interminable gangway. A spur of coral sand stood forth on the one hand; on the other, a high and thick tuft of trees cut off the view; between was



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the mouth of the huge laver. Twice a day the ocean crowded in that narrow entrance and was heaped between these frail walls; twice a day, with the return of the ebb, the mighty surplusage of water must struggle to escape. The hour in which the *Farallone* came there was the hour of flood. The sea turned (as with the instinct of the homing pigeon) for the vast receptacle, swept eddying through the gates, was transmuted, as it did so, into a wonder of watery and silken hues, and brimmed into the inland sea beyond. The schooner worked up, close-hauled, and was caught and carried away by the influx like a toy. She skimmed; she flew; a momentary shadow touched her decks from the shoreside trees; the bottom of the channel showed up for a moment, and was in a moment gone; the next, she floated on the bosom of the lagoon; and below, in the transparent chamber of waters, a myriad of many-coloured fishes were sporting, a myriad pale flowers of coral diversified the floor.

Herrick stood transported. In the gratified lust of his eye he forgot the past and the present; forgot that he was menaced by a prison on the one hand and starvation on the other; forgot that he was come to that island, desperately foraging, clutching at expedients. A drove of fishes painted like the rainbow and billed like parrots, hovered up in the shadow of the schooner, and passed clear of it, and glinted in the submarine



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sun. They were beautiful, like birds, and their silent passage impressed him like a strain of song.

Meanwhile, to the eye of Davis in the cross-trees, the lagoon continued to expand its empty waters and the long succession of the shoreside trees to be paid out like fishing-line off a reel. And still there was no mark of habitation. The schooner, immediately on entering, had been kept away to the northward, where the water seemed to be the most deep; and she was now skimming past the tall grove of trees, which stood on that side of the channel and denied further view. Of the whole of the low shores of the island, only this bight remained to be revealed. And suddenly the curtain was raised; they began to open out a haven, snugly elbowed there, and beheld, with an astonishment beyond words, the roofs of men. The appearance, thus "instantaneously disclosed" to those on the deck of the *Farallone*, was not that of a city, rather of a substantial country farm with its attendant hamlet,—a long line of sheds and store-houses; apart, upon the one side, a deep-verandahed dwelling-house; on the other, perhaps a dozen native huts, a building with a belfry and some rude offer at architectural features that might be thought to mark it out for a chapel; on the beach in front, some heavy boats drawn up, and a pile of timber running forth into the burning shallows of the lagoon. From a flag-staff at the pierhead, the red ensign of England was displayed. Be-



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hind, about, and over, the same tall grove of palms which had masked the settlement in the beginning, prolonged its roof of tumultuous green fans, and tossed and ruffled overhead, and sang its silver song all day in the wind. The place had the indescribable but unmistakable appearance of being in commission, yet there breathed from it a sense of desertion that was almost poignant; no human figure was to be observed going to and fro about the houses, and there was no sound of human industry or enjoyment. Only, on the top of the beach and hard by the flag-staff, a woman of exorbitant stature and as white as snow was to be seen, beckoning with uplifted arm. The second glance identified her as a piece of naval sculpture, the figure-head of a ship that had long hovered and plunged into so many running billows, and was now brought ashore to be the ensign and presiding genius of that empty town.

The *Farallone* made a soldier's breeze of it; the wind, besides, was stronger inside than without under the lee of the land; and the stolen schooner opened out successive objects with the swiftness of a panorama, so that the adventurers stood speechless. The flag spoke for itself; it was no frayed and weathered trophy that had beaten itself to pieces on the post, flying over desolation; and, to make assurance stronger, there was to be descried, in the deep shade of the verandah, a glitter of crystal and the fluttering of white



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napery. If the figure-head at the pier-end, with its perpetual gesture and its leprous whiteness, reigned alone in that hamlet, as it seemed to do, it could not have reigned long. Men's hands had been busy, men's feet stirring there, within the circuit of the clock. The *Farallones* were sure of it; their eyes dug in the deep shadow of the palms for some one hiding. If intensity of looking might have prevailed, they would have pierced the walls of houses; and there came to them, in these pregnant seconds, a sense of being watched and played with, and of a blow impending, that was hardly bearable.

The extreme point of palms they had just passed enclosed a creek, which was thus hidden up to the last moment from the eyes of those on board; and from this a boat put suddenly and briskly out, and a voice hailed.

"Schooner ahoy!" it cried. "Stand in for the pier! In two cables' lengths you'll have twenty fathoms' water and good holding-ground."

The boat was manned with a couple of brown oarsmen in scanty kilts of blue. The speaker, who was steering, wore white clothes, the full dress of the tropics. A wide hat shaded his face; but it could be seen that he was of stalwart size, and his voice sounded like a gentleman's. So much could be made out. It was plain, besides, that the *Farallone* had been descried some time before at sea, and the inhabitants were prepared for its reception.



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Mechanically the orders were obeyed, and the ship berthed; and the three adventurers gathered aft beside the house and waited, with galloping pulses and a perfect vacancy of mind, the coming of the stranger who might mean so much to them. They had no plan, no story prepared, there was no time to make one, they were caught red-handed, and must stand their chance. Yet this anxiety was checkered with hope. The island being undeclared, it was not possible the man could hold any office or be in a position to demand their papers. And beyond that, if there was any truth in Findlay, as it now seemed there should be, he was the representative of the "private reasons"; and must see their coming with a profound disappointment; and perhaps (hope whispered) he would be willing and able to purchase their silence.

The boat was by that time forging alongside, and they were able at last to see what manner of man they had to do with. He was a huge fellow, six feet four in height, and of a build proportionately strong, but his sinews seemed to be dissolved in a listlessness that was more than languor. It was only the eye that corrected this impression,—an eye of an unusual mingled brilliancy and softness, sombre as coal, and with lights that outshone the topaz; an eye of unimpaired health and virility; an eye that bid you beware of the man's devastating anger. A complexion naturally dark had been tanned in the



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island to a hue hardly distinguishable from that of a Tahitian; only his manners and movements, and the living force that dwelt in him, like fire in flint, betrayed the European. He was dressed in white drill, exquisitely made; his scarf and tie were of tender-coloured silks; on the thwart beside him there leaned a Winchester rifle.

"Is the doctor on board?" he cried, as he came up. "Dr. Symonds, I mean? You never heard of him? Nor yet of the *Trinity Hall?* Ah!" He did not look surprised; seemed, rather, to affect it in politeness; but his eye rested on each of the three white men in succession with a sudden weight of curiosity that was almost savage. "Ah, *then*," said he, "there is some small mistake, no doubt, and I must ask you to what I am indebted for this pleasure?"

He was by this time on the deck, but he had the art to be quite unapproachable; the friendliest vulgarian, three parts drunk, would have known better than take liberties; and not one of the adventurers so much as offered to shake hands.

"Well," said Davis, "I suppose you may call it an accident. We had heard of your island, and read that thing in the 'Directory' about the *private reasons*, you see; so when we saw the lagoon reflected in the sky, we put her head for it at once, and here we are."

"'Ope we don't intrude!" said Huish.

The stranger looked at Huish with an air of



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faint surprise, and looked pointedly away again. It was hard to be more offensive in dumb-show.

"It may suit me, your coming here," he said. "My own schooner is overdue, and I may put something in your way in the meantime. Are you open to a charter?"

"Well, I guess so," said Davis; "it depends."

"My name is Attwater," continued the stranger. "You, I presume, are the captain?"

"Yes, sir. I am the captain of this ship. Captain Brown," was the reply.

"Well, see 'ere!" said Huish, "better begin fair! 'E's skipper on deck right enough, but not below. Below we're all equal, all got a lay in the adventure. When it comes to business, I'm as good as 'e; and what I say is, let's go into the 'ouse and have a lush, and talk it over among pals. We've some prime fizz," he said, and winked.

The presence of the gentleman lighted up like a candle the vulgarity of the clerk; and Herrick, instinctively, as one shields himself from pain, made haste to interrupt.

"My name is Hay," said he, "since introductions are going. We shall be very glad if you will step inside."

Attwater leaned to him swiftly. "University man?" said he.

"Yes, Merton," said Herrick, and the next moment blushed scarlet at his indiscretion.

"I am of the other lot," said Attwater; "Trin-



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ity Hall, Cambridge. I called my schooner after the old shop. Well! this is a queer place and company for us to meet in, Mr. Hay," he pursued, with easy incivility to the others. "But do you bear out—I beg this gentleman's pardon, I really did not catch his name."

"My name is 'Uish, sir," returned the clerk, and blushed in turn.

"Ah!" said Attwater. And then turning again to Herrick, "Do you bear out Mr. Whish's description of your vintage, or was it only the unaffected poetry of his own nature bubbling up?"

Herrick was embarrassed; the silken brutality of their visitor made him blush. That he should be accepted as an equal, and the others thus pointedly ignored, pleased him in spite of himself, and then ran through his veins in a recoil of anger.

"I don't know," he said. "It's only California; it's good enough, I believe."

Attwater seemed to make up his mind. "Well, then, I'll tell you what: you three gentlemen come ashore this evening, and bring a basket of wine with you; I'll try and find the food," he said. "And by the by, here is a question I should have asked you when I came on board; Have you had smallpox?"

"Personally, no," said Herrick. "But the schooner had it."

"Deaths?" from Attwater.

"Two," said Herrick.



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"Well, it is a dreadful sickness," said Attwater.

"'Ad you any deaths," asked Huish, "'ere on the island?"

"Twenty-nine," said Attwater. "Twenty-nine deaths and thirty-one cases, out of thirty-three souls upon the island. That's a strange way to calculate, Mr. Hay, is it not? Souls! I never say it but it startles me."

"Oh, so that's why everything's deserted?" said Huish.

"That is why, Mr. Whish," said Attwater; "that is why the house is empty and the graveyard full."

"Twenty-nine out of thirty-three!" exclaimed Herrick. "Why, when it came to burying—or did you bother burying?"

"Scarcely," said Attwater; "or there was one day at least when we gave up. There were five of the dead that morning, and thirteen of the dying, and no one able to go about except the sexton and myself. We held a council of war, took the . . . empty bottles—into the lagoon, and . . . buried them." He looked over his shoulder, back at the bright water. "Well, so you'll come to dinner, then? Shall we say half-past six? *So* good of you!"

His voice, in uttering these conventional phrases, fell at once into the false measure of society; and Herrick unconsciously followed the example.



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"I am sure we shall be very glad," he said. "At half-past six? Thank you so very much."

"'For my voice has been tuned to the note of the gun
That startles the deep when the combat's begun,'"

quoted Attwater, with a smile, which instantly gave way to an air of funereal solemnity. "I shall particularly expect Mr. Whish," he continued. "Mr. Whish, I trust you understand the invitation?"

"I believe you, my boy!" replied the genial Huish.

"That is right, then; and quite understood, is it not?" said Attwater. "Mr. Whish and Captain Brown at six-thirty without fail; and you, Hay, at four sharp."

And he called his boat.

During all this talk, a load of thought or anxiety had weighed upon the captain. There was no part for which nature had so liberally endowed him as that of the genial ship-captain. But to-day he was silent and abstracted. Those who knew him could see that he hearkened close to every syllable, and seemed to ponder and try it in balances. It would have been hard to say what look there was, cold, attentive, and sinister, as of a man maturing plans, which still brooded over the unconscious guest; it was here, it was there, it was nowhere; it was now so little that Herrick chid himself for an idle fancy; and anon



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it was so gross and palpable that you could say every hair on the man's head talked mischief.

He woke up now, as with a start. "You were talking of a charter," said he.

"Was I?" said Attwater. "Well, let's talk of it no more at present."

"Your own schooner is overdue, I understand?" continued the captain.

"You understand perfectly, Captain Brown," said Attwater; "thirty-three days overdue at noon to-day."

"She comes and goes, eh? Flies between here and . . . ?" hinted the captain.

"Exactly; every four months; three trips in the year," said Attwater.

"You go in her ever?" asked Davis.

"No, I stop here," said Attwater; "one has plenty to attend to here."

"Stop here, do you?" cried Davis. "Say, how long?"

"How long, O Lord!" said Attwater, with perfect, stern gravity. "But it does not seem so," he added, with a smile.

"No, I daresay not," said Davis. "No, I suppose not. Not with all your gods about you, and in as snug a berth as this. For it is a pretty snug berth," said he, with a sweeping look.

"The spot, as you are good enough to indicate, is not entirely intolerable," was the reply.

"Shell, I suppose?" said Davis.

"Yes, there was shell," said Attwater.



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"This is a considerable big beast of a lagoon, sir," said the captain. "Was there a—was the fishing—would you call the fishing anyways *good?*"

"I don't know that I would call it anyways anything," said Attwater, "if you put it to me direct."

"There were pearls, too?" said Davis.

"Pearls, too," said Attwater.

"Well, I give out!" laughed Davis, and his laughter rang cracked like a false piece. "If you're not going to tell, you're not going to tell, and there's an end to it."

"There can be no reason why I should affect the least degree of secrecy about my island," returned Attwater; "that came wholly to an end with your arrival; and I am sure at any rate that gentlemen like you and Mr. Whish I should have always been charmed to make perfectly at home. The point on which we are now differing —if you can call it a difference—is one of times and seasons. I have some information which you think I might impart, and I think not. Well, we'll see to-night! By-by, Whish!" He stepped into his boat and shoved off. "All understood, then?" said he. "The captain and Mr. Whish at six-thirty, and you, Hay, at four precise. You understand that, Hay? Mind, I take no denial. If you're not there by the time named, there will be no banquet. No song, no supper, Mr. Whish!"



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White birds whisked in the air above, a shoal of party-coloured fishes in the scarce denser medium below; between, like Mahomet's coffin, the boat drew away briskly on the surface, and its shadow followed it over the glittering floor of the lagoon. Attwater looked steadily back over his shoulders as he sat; he did not once remove his eyes from the *Farallone* and the group on her quarter-deck beside the house, till his boat ground upon the pier. Thence, with an agile pace, he hurried ashore, and they saw his white clothes shining in the checkered dusk of the grove until the house received him.

The captain, with a gesture and a speaking countenance, called the adventurers into the cabin.

"Well," he said to Herrick, when they were seated, "there's one good job at least: he's taken to you in earnest."

"Why should that be a good job?" said Herrick.

"Oh, you'll see how it pans out presently," returned Davis. "You go ashore and stand in with him, that's all! You'll get lots of pointers; you can find out what he has, and what the charter is, and who's the fourth man,—for there's four of them, and we're only three."

"And suppose I do, what next?" cried Herrick. "Answer me that!"

"So I will, Robert Herrick," said the captain. "But first, let's see all clear. I guess you know,"



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he said with an imperious solemnity, "I guess you know the bottom is about out of this *Faral-lone* speculation? I guess you know it's *right* out; and if this old island hadn't turned up right when it did, I guess you know where you and I and Huish would have been?"

"Yes, I know that," said Herrick. "No matter who's to blame, I know it. And what next?"

"No matter who's to blame, you know it, right enough," said the captain, "and I'm obliged to you for the reminder. Now here's this Attwater; what do you think of him?"

"I do not know," said Herrick. "I am attracted and repelled. He was insufferably rude to you."

"And you, Huish?" said the captain.

Huish sat cleaning a favourite briar-root; he scarce looked up from that engrossing task. "Don't ast me what I think of him!" he said. "There's a day comin', I pray Gawd, when I can tell it him myself."

"Huish means the same as what I do," said Davis. "When that man came stepping around, and saying: 'Look here, I'm Attwater'—and you knew it was so, by God!—I sized him right straight up. Here's the real article, I said, and I don't like it; here's the real, first-rate, copper-bottomed aristocrat. '*Aw! don't know ye, do I? God damn ye, did God make ye?*' No, that couldn't be nothing but genuine; a man's got to be born to that, and notice! smart as champagne and



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hard as nails; no kind of a fool; no, *sir!* not a pound of him! Well, what's he here upon this beastly island for? I said. *He's* not here collecting eggs. He's a palace at home, and powdered flunkeys; and if he don't stay there, you bet he knows the reason why! Follow?"

"Oh, yes, I 'ear you," said Huish.

"He's been doing good business here, then," continued the captain. "For years he's been doing a great business. It's pearl and shell, of course; there couldn't be nothing else in such a place; and no doubt the shell goes off regularly by this *Trinity Hall*, and the money for it straight into the bank, so that's no use to us. But what else is there? Is there nothing else he would be likely to keep here? Is there nothing else he would be bound to keep here? Yes, sir; the pearls! First, because they're too valuable to trust out of his hands. Second, because pearls want a lot of handling and matching; and the man who sells his pearls as they come in, one here, one there, instead of hanging back and holding up—well, that man's a fool, and it's not Attwater."

"It's likely," said Huish, "that's w'at it is; not proved, but likely."

"It's proved," said Davis, bluntly.

"Suppose it was?" said Herrick. "Suppose that was all so, and he had these pearls,—years' and years' collection of them? Suppose he had? There's my question."

The captain drummed with his thick hands on



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the board in front of him; he looked steadily in Herrick's face, and Herrick as steadily looked upon the table and the pattering fingers. There was a gentle oscillation of the anchored ship, and a big patch of sunlight travelled to and fro between one and the other.

"Hear me!" Herrick burst out suddenly.

"No, you better hear me first," said Davis. "Hear me and understand me. *We*'ve got no use for that fellow, whatever you may have. He's your kind, he's not ours; he's took to you, and he's wiped his boots on me and Huish. Save him if you can!"

"Save him?" repeated Herrick.

"Save him if you're able!" reiterated Davis, with a blow of his clinched fist. "Go ashore, and talk him smooth; and if you get him and his pearls aboard, I'll spare him. If you don't, there's going to be a funeral.—Is that so, Huish? Does that suit you?"

"I ain't a forgiving man," said Huish, "but I'm not the sort to spoil business neither. Bring the bloke on board, and his pearls along with him, and you can have it your own way; maroon him where you like—I'm agreeable."

"Well, and if I can't?" cried Herrick, while the sweat streamed upon his face. "You talk to me as if I was God Almighty, to do this and that! But if I can't?"

"My son," said the captain, "you better do your level best, or you'll see sights!"



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"Oh, yes," said Huish. "Oh, crikey, yes!" He looked across at Herrick with a toothless smile that was shocking in its savagery; and, his ear caught apparently by the trivial expression he had used, he broke into a piece of the chorus of a comic song which he must have heard twenty years before in London,—meaningless gibberish that, in that hour and place, seemed hateful as a blasphemy: "Hikey, pikey, crikey, fikey, chillingawallaba dory."

The captain suffered him to finish; his face was unchanged.

"The way things are, there's many a man that wouldn't let you go ashore," he resumed. "But I'm not that kind. I know you'd never go back on me, Herrick! Or if you choose to,—go and do it, and be damned!" he cried, and rose abruptly from the table.

He walked out of the house, and, as he reached the door, turned and called Huish, suddenly and violently, like the barking of a dog. Huish followed, and Herrick remained alone in the cabin.

"Now, see here!" whispered Davis; "I know that man. If you open your mouth to him again, you'll ruin all."



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## CHAPTER VIII

### BETTER ACQUAINTANCE

THE boat was gone again, and already halfway to the *Farallone*, before Herrick turned and went unwillingly up the pier. From the crown of the beach, the figure-head confronted him with what seemed irony, her helmeted head tossed back, her formidable arm apparently hurling something, whether shell or missile, in the direction of the anchored schooner. She seemed a defiant deity from the island, coming forth to its threshold with a rush as of one about to fly, and perpetuated in that dashing attitude. Herrick looked up at her, where she towered above him head and shoulders, with singular feelings of curiosity and romance, and suffered his mind to travel to and fro in her life-history. So long she had been the blind conductress of a ship among the waves; so long she had stood here idle in the violent sun that yet did not avail to blister her; and was even this the end of so many adventures, he wondered, or was more behind? And he could have found it in his heart to regret that she was not a goddess, nor yet he a pagan,



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that he might have bowed down before her in that hour of difficulty.

When he now went forward, it was cool with the shadow of many well-grown palms; draughts of the dying breeze swung them together overhead; and on all sides, with a swiftness beyond dragon-flies or swallows, the spots of sunshine flitted and hovered and returned. Underfoot, the sand was fairly solid and quite level, and Herrick's steps fell there noiseless as in new-fallen snow. It bore the marks of having been once weeded like a garden alley at home; but the pestilence had done its work, and the weeds were returning. The buildings of the settlement showed here and there through the stems of the colonnade, fresh-painted, trim and dandy, and all silent as the grave. Only here and there in the crypt, there was a rustle and scurry and some crowing of poultry; and from behind the house with the verandahs he saw smoke arise and heard the crackling of a fire.

The store-houses were nearest him upon his right. The first was locked; in the second he could dimly perceive, through a window, a certain accumulation of pearl-shell piled in the far end; the third, which stood gaping open on the afternoon, seized on the mind of Herrick with its multiplicity and disorder of romantic things. Therein were cables, windlasses and blocks of every size and capacity; cabin-windows and ladders; rusty tanks; a companion hatch; a binnacle



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with its brass mountings, and its compass idly pointing, in the confusion and dusk of that shed, to a forgotten pole; ropes, anchors, harpoons; a blubber-dipper of copper, green with years; a steering-wheel; a tool-chest with the vessel's name upon the top, the *Asia*,—a whole curiosity-shop of sea-curios, gross and solid, heavy to lift, ill to break, bound with brass and shod with iron. Two wrecks at least must have contributed to this random heap of lumber; and as Herrick looked upon it, it seemed to him as if the two ship's companies were there on guard, and he heard the tread of feet and whisperings, and saw with the tail of his eye the commonplace ghosts of sailor men.

This was not merely the work of an aroused imagination, but had something sensible to go upon. Sounds of a stealthy approach were no doubt audible; and while he still stood staring at the lumber, the voice of his host sounded suddenly, and with even more than the customary softness of enunciation, from behind.

"Junk," it said, "only old junk! And does Mr. Hay find a parable?"

"I find at least a strong impression," replied Herrick, turning quickly, lest he might be able to catch, on the face of the speaker, some commentary on the words.

Attwater stood in the doorway, which he almost wholly filled, his hands stretched above his head and grasping the architrave. He smiled



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when their eyes met, but the expression was inscrutable.

"Yes, a powerful impression. You are like me—nothing so affecting as ships!" said he. "The ruins of an empire would leave me frigid, when a bit of an old rail that an old shellback leaned on in the middle watch would bring me up all standing. But come, let's see some more of the island. It's all sand and coral and palm-trees; but there's a kind of quaintness in the place."

"I find it heavenly," said Herrick, breathing deep, with head bared in the shadow.

"Ah, that's because you're new from sea," said Attwater. "I daresay, too, you can appreciate what one calls it. It's a lovely name. It has a flavour, it has a colour, it has a ring and fall to it; it's like its author—it's half Christian! Remember your first view of the island, and how it's only woods and water; and suppose you had asked somebody for the name, and he had answered, *nemorosa Zacynthos*."

"*Jam medio apparet fluctu!*" exclaimed Herrick. "Ye gods! yes, how good!"

"If it gets upon the chart, the skippers will make nice work of it," said Attwater. "But here, come and see the diving-shed."

He opened a door, and Herrick saw a large display of apparatus neatly ordered,—pumps and pipes, and the leaded boots, and the huge snouted helmets shining in rows along the wall; ten complete outfits.



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"The whole eastern half of my lagoon is shallow, you must understand," said Attwater; "so we were able to get in the dress to great advantage. It paid beyond belief, and was a queer sight when they were at it; and these marine monsters"—tapping the nearest of the helmets—"kept appearing and reappearing in the midst of the lagoon. Fond of parables?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, yes!" said Herrick.

"Well, I saw these machines come up dripping and go down again, and come up dripping and go down again, and all the while the fellow inside as dry as toast," said Attwater; "and I thought we all wanted a dress to go down into the world in, and come up scatheless. What do you think the name was?" he inquired.

"Self-conceit," said Herrick.

"Ah, but I mean seriously," said Attwater.

"Call it self-respect, then," corrected Herrick, with a laugh.

"And why not Grace? Why not God's Grace, Hay?" asked Attwater. "Why not the grace of your Maker and Redeemer, He who died for you, He who upholds you, He whom you daily crucify afresh? There is nothing here"—striking on his bosom—"nothing there"—smiting the wall—"and nothing there"—stamping—"nothing but God's Grace! We walk upon it, we breathe it; we live and die by it; it makes the nails and axles of the universe; and a puppy in pyjamas



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prefers self-conceit!" The huge dark man stood over against Herrick by the line of divers' helmets, and seemed to swell and glow; and the next moment the life had gone from him. "I beg your pardon," said he; "I see you don't believe in God."

"Not in your sense, I am afraid," said Herrick.

"I never argue with young atheists or habitual drunkards," said Attwater, flippantly.—"Let us go across the island to the outer beach."

It was but a little way, the greatest width of that island scarce exceeding a furlong, and they walked gently. Herrick was like one in a dream. He had come there with a mind divided; come prepared to study that ambiguous and sneering mask, drag out the essential man from underneath, and act accordingly; decision being till then postponed. Iron cruelty, an iron insensibility to the suffering of others, the uncompromising pursuit of his own interests, cold culture, manners without humanity: these he had looked for, these he still thought he saw. But to find the whole machine thus glow with the reverberation of religious zeal, surprised him beyond words; and he laboured in vain, as he walked, to piece together into any kind of whole his odds and ends of knowledge; to adjust again, into any kind of focus with itself, his picture of the man beside him.

"What brought you here to the South Seas?" he asked presently.



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"Many things," said Attwater. "Youth, curiosity, romance, the love of the sea, and (it will surprise you to hear) an interest in missions. That has a good deal declined, which will surprise you less. They go the wrong way to work; they are too parsonish, too much of the old wife, and even the old apple-wife. *Clothes, clothes*, are their idea; but clothes are not Christianity, any more than they are the sun in heaven, or could take the place of it! They think a parsonage with roses, and church-bells, and nice old women bobbing in the lanes, are part and parcel of religion. But religion is a savage thing, like the universe it illuminates; savage, cold, and bare, but infinitely strong."

"And you found this island by an accident?" said Herrick.

"As you did," said Attwater. "And since then I have had a business and a colony and a mission of my own. I was a man of the world before I was a Christian; I'm a man of the world still, and I made my mission pay. No good ever came of coddling. A man has to stand up in God's sight and work up to his weight avoirdupois; then I'll talk to him, but not before. I gave these beggars what they wanted,—a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge. I was making a new people here, and behold, the angel of the Lord smote them, and they were not!"

With the very uttering of the words, which



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were accompanied by a gesture, they came forth out of the porch of the palm wood by the margin of the sea, and full in front of the sun, which was near setting. Before them the surf broke slowly. All around, with an air of imperfect wooden things inspired with wicked activity, the land-crabs trundled and scuttled into holes. On the right, whither Attwater pointed and abruptly turned, was the cemetery of the island, a field of broken stones from the bigness of a child's hand to that of his head, diversified by many mounds of the same material, and walled by a rude rectangular enclosure of the same. Nothing grew there but a shrub or two with some white flowers; nothing but the number of the mounds, and their disquieting shape, indicated the presence of the dead.

"'The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep!'"

quoted Attwater, as he entered by the open gateway into that unhomely close. "Coral to coral, pebbles to pebbles," he said; "this has been the main scene of my activity in the South Pacific. Some were good, and some bad, and the majority (of course and always) null. Here was a fellow, now, that used to frisk like a dog; if you had called him, he came like an arrow from a bow; if you had not, and he came unbidden, you should have seen the deprecating eye and the little intricate dancing step. Well, his trouble is over now; he has lain down with kings and councillors;



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the rest of his acts, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles? That fellow was from Penrhyn; like all the Penrhyn islanders he was ill to manage; heady, jealous, violent,—the man with the nose! He lies here quiet enough. And so they all lie.

"'And darkness was the burier of the dead.'"

He stood, in the strong glow of the sunset, with bowed head; his voice sounded now sweet and now bitter, with the varying sense.

"You loved these people?" cried Herrick, strangely touched.

"I?" said Attwater. "Dear, no! Don't think me a philanthropist. I dislike men, and I hate women. If I like the islands at all, it is because you see them here plucked of their lendings, their dead birds and cocked hats, their petticoats and coloured hose. Here was one I liked, though," and he set his foot upon a mound. "He was a fine, savage fellow; he had a dark soul. Yes, I liked this one. I am fanciful," he added, looking hard at Herrick, "and I take fads. I like you."

Herrick turned swiftly, and looked far away to where the clouds were beginning to troop together and amass themselves round the obsequies of day. "No one can like me," he said.

"You are wrong there," said the other, "as a man usually is about himself. You are attractive, very attractive."



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"It is not me," said Herrick; "no one can like me. If you knew how I despised myself—and why!" His voice rang out in the quiet graveyard.

"I knew that you despised yourself," said Attwater. "I saw the blood come into your face to-day when you remembered Oxford. And I could have blushed for you myself, to see a man, a gentleman, with those two vulgar wolves."

Herrick faced him with a thrill. "Wolves?" he repeated.

"I said wolves, and vulgar wolves," said Attwater. "Do you know that to-day, when I came on board, I trembled?"

"You concealed it well," stammered Herrick.

"A habit of mine," said Attwater. "But I was afraid, for all that. I was afraid of the two wolves." He raised his hand slowly. "And now, Hay, you poor, lost puppy, what do you do with the two wolves?"

"What do I do? I don't do anything," said Herrick. "There is nothing wrong; all is above board; Captain Brown is a good soul; he is a . . . he is . . ." The phantom voice of Davis called in his ear, "There's going to be a funeral"; and the sweat burst forth and streamed on his brow. "He is a family man," he resumed again, swallowing; "he has children at home,—and a wife."

"And a very nice man?" said Attwater. "And so is Mr. Whish, no doubt?"



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"I won't go so far as that," said Herrick. "I do not like Huish. And yet . . . he has his merits, too."

"And, in short, take them for all in all, as good a ship's company as one would ask?" said Attwater.

"Oh, yes," said Herrick, "quite."

"So then, we approach the other point of why you despise yourself?" said Attwater.

"Do we not all despise ourselves?" cried Herrick. "Do not you?"

"Oh, I say I do. But do I?" said Attwater. "One thing I know at least: I never gave a cry like yours. Hay, it came from a bad conscience! Ah, man, that poor diving-dress of self-conceit is sadly tattered! To-day, if ye will hear my voice. To-day, now, while the sun sets, and here in this burying-place of brown innocents, fall on your knees and cast your sins and sorrows on the Redeemer. Hay——"

"Not Hay!" interrupted the other, strangling. "Don't call me that! I mean . . . For God's sake, can't you see I'm on the rack?"

"I see it, I know it, I put and keep you there; my fingers are on the screws," said Attwater. "Please God, I will bring a penitent this night before His throne. Come, come to the mercy-seat! He waits to be gracious, man,—waits to be gracious!"

He spread out his arms like a crucifix; his face shone with the brightness of a seraph's; in his



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voice, as it rose to the last word, the tears seemed ready.

Herrick made a vigorous call upon himself. "Attwater," he said, "you push me beyond bearing. What am I to do? I do not believe. It is living truth to you; to me, upon my conscience, only folk-lore. I do not believe there is any form of words under heaven by which I can lift the burthen from my shoulders. I must stagger on to the end with the pack of my responsibility; I cannot shift it. Do you suppose I would not, if I thought I could? I cannot—cannot—cannot—and let that suffice!"

The rapture was all gone from Attwater's countenance; the dark apostle had disappeared, and in his place there stood an easy, sneering gentleman, who took off his hat and bowed. It was pertly done, and the blood burned in Herrick's face.

"What do you mean by that?" he cried.

"Well, shall we go back to the house?" said Attwater. "Our guests will soon be due."

Herrick stood his ground a moment, with clenched fists and teeth; and as he so stood, the fact of his errand there slowly swung clear in front of him, like the moon out of clouds. He had come to lure that man on board; he was failing, even if it could be said that he had tried; he was sure to fail now, and knew it, and knew it was better so. And what was to be next?

With a groan he turned to follow his host, who



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was standing with a polite smile, and instantly, and somewhat obsequiously, led the way into the now darkened colonnade of palms. There they went in silence; the earth gave up richly of her perfume, the air tasted warm and aromatic in the nostrils, and, from a great way forward in the wood, the brightness of lights and fire marked out the house of Attwater.

Herrick meanwhile resolved and resisted an immense temptation to go up, to touch him on the arm, and breathe a word in his ear: "Beware, they are going to murder you." There would be one life saved; but what of the two others? The three lives went up and down before him like buckets in a well, or like the scales of balances. It had come to a choice, and one that must be speedy. For certain invaluable minutes the wheels of life ran before him, and he could still divert them with a touch to the one side or the other; still choose who was to live and who was to die. He considered the men. Attwater intrigued, puzzled, dazzled, enchanted, revolted him. Alive, he seemed but a doubtful good; and the thought of him lying dead was so unwelcome that it pursued him, like a vision, with every circumstance of colour and sound. Incessantly he had before him the image of that great mass of man, stricken down, in varying attitudes and with varying wounds; fallen prone, fallen supine, fallen on his side, or clinging to a doorpost, with the changing face and the



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relaxing fingers of the death agony. He heard the click of the trigger, the thud of the ball, the cry of the victim; he saw the blood flow. And this building-up of circumstance was like a consecration of the man, till he seemed to walk in sacrificial fillets. Next he considered Davis, with his thick-fingered, coarse-grained, oat-bread commonness of nature; his indomitable valour and mirth in the old days of their starvation; the endearing blend of his faults and virtues; the sudden shining forth of a tenderness that lay too deep for tears; his children,—Ada and her bowel-complaint, and Ada's doll. No, death could not be suffered to approach that head, even in fancy. With a general heat and a bracing of his muscles, it was borne in on Herrick that Ada's father would find in him a son to the death. And even Huish shared a little in that sacredness; by the tacit adoption of daily life they were become brothers; there was an implied bond of loyalty in their cohabitation of the ship and of their past miseries, to which Herrick must be a little true or wholly dishonoured. Horror of sudden death for horror of sudden death, there was here no hesitation possible; it must be Attwater. And no sooner was the thought formed (which was a sentence) than the whole mind of the man ran in a panic to the other side; and when he looked within himself, he was aware only of turbulence and inarticulate outcry.

In all this there was no thought of Robert



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Herrick. He had complied with the ebb-tide in man's affairs, and the tide had carried him away; he heard already the roaring of the maelstrom that must hurry him under. And in his bedevilled and dishonoured soul there was no thought of self.

For how long he walked silent by his companion, Herrick had no guess. The clouds rolled suddenly away; the orgasm was over; he found himself placid with the placidity of despair; there returned to him the power of commonplace speech: and he heard with surprise his own voice say: "What a lovely evening!"

"Is it not?" said Attwater. "Yes, the evenings here would be very pleasant if one had anything to do. By day, of course, one can shoot."

"You shoot?" asked Herrick.

"Yes, I am what you would call a fine shot," said Attwater. "It is faith; I believe my balls will go true; if I were to miss once, it would spoil me for nine months."

"You never miss, then?" said Herrick.

"Not unless I mean to," said Attwater. "But to miss nicely is the art. There was an old king one knew in the western islands, who used to empty a Winchester all round a man, and stir his hair or nick a rag out of his clothes with every ball except the last; and that went plump between the eyes. It was pretty practice."

"You could do that?" asked Herrick, with a sudden chill.



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"Oh, I can do anything," returned the other. "You do not understand; what must be, must."

They were now come near to the back part of the house. One of the men was engaged about the cooking-fire, which burned with the clear, fierce, essential radiance of cocoa-nut shells. A fragrance of strange meats was in the air. All round in the verandahs lamps were lighted, so that the place shone abroad in the dusk of the trees with many complicated patterns of shadow.

"Come and wash your hands," said Attwater, and led the way into a clean, matted room with a cot-bed, a safe, a shelf or two of books in a glazed case, and an iron washing-stand. Presently he cried in the native tongue, and there appeared for a moment in the doorway a plump and pretty young woman with a clean towel.

"Hullo!" cried Herrick, who now saw for the first time the fourth survivor of the pestilence, and was startled by the recollection of the captain's orders.

"Yes," said Attwater, "the whole colony lives about the house,—what's left of it. We are all afraid of devils, if you please, and Taniera and she sleep in the front parlour, and the other boy on the verandah."

"She is pretty," said Herrick.

"Too pretty," said Attwater. "That was why I had her married. A man never knows when he may be inclined to be a fool about women: so when we were left alone, I had the



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pair of them to the chapel and performed the ceremony. She made a lot of fuss. I do not take at all the romantic view of marriage," he explained.

"And that strikes you as a safeguard?" asked Herrick, with amazement.

"Certainly. I am a plain man, and very literal. *Whom God hath joined together*, are the words, I fancy. So one married them, and respects the marriage," said Attwater.

"Ah!" said Herrick.

"You see, I may look to make an excellent marriage when I go home," began Attwater, confidentially. "I am rich. This safe alone"—laying his hand upon it—"will be a moderate fortune when I have the time to place the pearls upon the market. Here are ten years' accumulation from a lagoon where I have had as many as ten divers going all day long; and I went further than people usually do in these waters, for I rotted a lot of shell, and did splendidly. Would you like to see them?"

This confirmation of the captain's guess hit Herrick hard, and he contained himself with difficulty. "No, thank you, I think not," said he. "I do not care for pearls, I am very indifferent to all these . . ."

"Gewgaws?" suggested Attwater. "And yet I believe you ought to cast an eye on my collection, which is really unique, and which—Oh! it is the case with all of us and everything about



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us!—hangs by a hair. To-day it groweth up and flourisheth; to-morrow it is cut down and cast into the oven. To-day it is here and together in this safe; to-morrow, to-night, it may be scattered. Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

"I do not understand you," said Herrick.

"Not?" said Attwater.

"You seem to speak in riddles," said Herrick, unsteadily. "I do not understand what manner of man you are, nor what you are driving at."

Attwater stood with his hands upon his hips, and his head bent forward. "I am a fatalist," he replied, "and just now (if you insist on it) an experimentalist. Talking of which, by the by, who painted out the schooner's name?" he said, with mocking softness. "Because, do you know? one thinks it should be done again. It can still be partly read; and whatever is worth doing, is surely worth doing well. You think with me? That is so nice. Well, shall we step on the verandah? I have a dry sherry that I would like your opinion of."

Herrick followed him forth to where, under the light of the hanging lamps, the table shone with napery and crystal; followed him as the criminal goes with the hangman, or the sheep with the butcher; took the sherry mechanically, drank it, and spoke mechanical words of praise. The object of his terror had become suddenly inverted; till then he had seen Attwater trussed and gag-



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ged, a helpless victim, and had longed to run in and save him; he saw him now tower up mysterious and menacing, the angel of the Lord's wrath, armed with knowledge, and threatening judgment. He set down his glass again, and was surprised to see it empty.

"You go always armed?" he said, and the next moment could have plucked his tongue out.

"Always," said Attwater. "I have been through a mutiny here; that was one of my incidents of missionary life."

And just then the sound of voices reached them, and looking forth from the verandah, they saw Huish and the captain drawing near.



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## CHAPTER IX

### THE DINNER PARTY

THEY sat down to an island dinner, remarkable for its variety and excellence; turtle soup and steak, fish, fowls, a sucking-pig, a cocoa-nut salad, and sprouting cocoa-nut roasted for dessert. Not a tin had been opened; and save for the oil and vinegar in the salad, and some green spears of onion which Attwater cultivated and plucked with his own hand, not even the condiments were European. Sherry, hock, and claret succeeded each other, and the *Farallone* champagne brought up the rear with the dessert.

It was plain that, like so many of the extremely religious in the days before teetotalism, Attwater had a dash of the epicure. For such characters it is softening to eat well; doubly so to have designed and had prepared an excellent meal for others; and the manners of their host were agreeably mollified in consequence. A cat of huge growth sat on his shoulder purring, and occasionally, with a deft paw, captured a morsel in the air. To a cat he might be likened himself, as he lolled at the head of his table, dealing out



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attentions and innuendoes, and using the velvet and the claw indifferently. And both Huish and the captain fell progressively under the charm of his hospitable freedom.

Over the third guest, the incidents of the dinner may be said to have passed for long unheeded. Herrick accepted all that was offered him, ate and drank without tasting, and heard without comprehension. His mind was singly occupied in contemplating the horror of the circumstance in which he sat. What Attwater knew, what the captain designed, from which side treachery was to be first expected, these were the ground of his thoughts. There were times when he longed to throw down the table and flee into the night. And even that was debarred him. To do anything, to say anything, to move at all, were only to precipitate the barbarous tragedy; and he sat spellbound, eating with white lips. Two of his companions observed him narrowly; Attwater with raking, side-long glances that did not interrupt his talk, the captain with a heavy and anxious consideration.

"Well, I must say this sherry is a really prime article," said Huish. "'Ow much does it stand you in, if it's a fair question?"

"A hundred and twelve shillings in London, and the freight to Valparaiso and on again," said Attwater. "It strikes one as really not a bad fluid."

"A 'undred and twelve!" murmured the clerk,



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relishing the wine and the figures in a common ecstasy. "Oh my!"

"So glad you like it," said Attwater. "Help yourself, Mr. Whish, and keep the bottle by you."

"My friend's name is Huish, and not Whish, sir," said the captain, with a flush.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure. Huish and not Whish—certainly," said Attwater. "I was about to say that I have still eight dozen," he added, fixing the captain with his eye.

"Eight dozen what?" said Davis.

"Sherry," was the reply. "Eight dozen excellent sherry. Why, it seems almost worth it in itself, to a man fond of wine."

The ambiguous words struck home to guilty consciences, and Huish and the captain sat up in their places and regarded him with a scare.

"Worth what?" said Davis.

"A hundred and twelve shillings," replied Attwater.

The captain breathed hard for a moment. He reached out far and wide to find any coherency in these remarks; then, with a great effort, changed the subject.

"I allow we are about the first white men upon this island, sir," said he.

Attwater followed him at once, and with entire gravity, to the new ground. "Myself and Dr. Symonds excepted, I should say the only ones," he returned. "And yet who can tell? In the course of the ages some one may have lived here,



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and we sometimes think that some one must. The cocoa-palms grow all round the island, which is scarce like Nature's planting. We found, besides, when we landed, an unmistakable cairn upon the beach; use unknown, but probably erected in the hope of gratifying some mumbo-jumbo whose very name is forgotten, by some thick-witted gentry whose very bones are lost. Then the island (witness the 'Directory') has been twice reported; and since my tenancy we have had two wrecks, both derelict. The rest is conjecture."

"Dr. Symonds is your partner, I guess?" said Davis.

"A dear fellow, Symonds! How he would regret it, if he knew you had been here," said Attwater.

"'E's on the *Trinity 'All*, ain't he?" asked Huish.

"And if you could tell me where the *Trinity 'All* was, you would confer a favour, Mr. Whish!" was the reply.

"I suppose she has a native crew?" said Davis.

"Since the secret has been kept ten years, one would suppose she had," replied Attwater.

"Well, now, see 'ere!" said Huish. "You have everything about you in no end style, and no mistake, but I tell you it wouldn't do for me. Too much of 'the old rustic bridge by the mill'; too retired by 'alf. Give me the sound of Bow Bells!"



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"You must not think it was always so," replied Attwater. "This was once a busy shore, although now, hark! you can hear the solitude. I find it stimulating. And talking of the sound of bells, kindly follow a little experiment of mine in silence." There was a silver bell at his right hand to call the servants; he made them a sign to stand still, struck the bell with force, and leaned eagerly forward. The note rose clear and strong; it rang out clear and far into the night and over the deserted island; it died into the distance until there only lingered in the porches of the ear a vibration that was sound no longer. "Empty houses, empty sea, solitary beaches!" said Attwater. "And yet God hears the bell! And yet we sit in this verandah, on a lighted stage, with all heaven for spectators! And you call that solitude?"

There followed a bar of silence, during which the captain sat mesmerised.

Then Attwater laughed softly. "These are the diversions of a lonely man," he resumed, "and possibly not in good taste. One tells one's self these little fairy tales for company. If there *should* happen to be anything in folk-lore, Mr. Hay? But here comes the claret. One does not offer you Laffitte, captain, because I believe it is all sold to the railroad dining-cars in your great country: but this Brâne-Mouton is of a good year, and Mr. Whish will give me news of it."

"That's a queer idea of yours!" cried the cap-



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tain, bursting with a sigh from the spell that had bound him. "So you mean to tell me, now, that you sit here evenings and ring up . . . well, ring on the angels . . . by yourself?"

"As a matter of historic fact, and since you put it directly, one does not," said Attwater. "Why ring a bell, when there flows out from one's self and everything about one a far more momentous silence? The least beat of my heart, and the least thought in my mind, echoing into eternity for ever and for ever and for ever."

"Oh, look 'ere," said Huish, "turn down the lights at once, and the Band of 'Ope will oblige! This ain't a spiritual séance."

"No folk-lore about Mr. Whish—I beg your pardon, captain; Huish, not Whish, of course," said Attwater.

As the boy was filling Huish's glass, the bottle escaped from his hand and was shattered, and the wine spilt on the verandah floor. Instant grimness as of death appeared in the face of Attwater; he smote the bell imperiously, and the two brown natives fell into the attitude of attention, and stood mute and trembling. There was a moment of silence and hard looks; then followed a few savage words in the native; and, upon a gesture of dismissal, the service proceeded as before.

None of the party had as yet observed upon the excellent bearing of the two men. They were dark, undersized, and well set up; stepped softly, waited deftly, brought on the wines and dishes



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at a look, and their eyes attended studiously on their master.

"Where do you get your labour from, anyway?" asked Davis.

"Ah, where not?" answered Attwater.

"Not much of a soft job, I suppose?" said the captain.

"If you will tell me where getting labour is," said Attwater, with a shrug. "And, of course, in our case, as we could name no destination, we had to go far and wide, and do the best we could. We have gone as far west as the Kingsmills, and as far south as Rapa-iti. Pity Symonds isn't here! He is full of yarns. That was his part, to collect them. Then began mine, which was the educational."

"You mean to run them?" said Davis.

"Ay, to run them," said Attwater.

"Wait a bit," said Davis, "I'm out of my depth. How was this? Do you mean to say you did it single-handed?"

"One did it single-handed," said Attwater, "because there was nobody to help one."

"By God, but you must be a holy terror!" cried the captain, in a glow of admiration.

"One does one's best," said Attwater.

"Well, now!" said Davis, "I have seen a lot of driving in my time, and been counted a good driver myself; I fought my way, third mate, round the Cape Horn with a push of packet-rats that would have turned the devil out of hell and



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shut the door on him; and, I tell you, this racket of Mr. Attwater's takes the cake. In a ship,—why there ain't nothing to it! You've got the law with you, that's what does it. But put me down on this blame' beach, alone, with nothing but a whip and a mouthful of bad words, and ask me to . . . no, *sir!* it's not good enough! I haven't got the sand for that!" cried Davis. "It's the law behind," he added; "it's the law does it, every time!"

"The beak ain't as black as he's sometimes pynted," observed Huish, humorously.

"Well, one got the law after a fashion," said Attwater. "One had to be a number of things. It was sometimes rather a bore."

"I should smile!" said Davis. "Rather lively, I should think."

"I daresay we mean the same thing," said Attwater. "However, one way or another, one got it knocked into their heads that they *must* work, and they *did* . . . until the Lord took them."

"'Ope you made 'em jump," said Huish.

"When it was necessary, Mr. Whish, I made them jump," said Attwater.

"You bet you did!" cried the captain. He was a good deal flushed, but not so much with wine as admiration; and his eyes drank in the huge proportions of the other with delight. "You bet you did, and you bet that I can see you doing it. By God, you're a man; and you can say I said so!"



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"Too good of you, I'm sure," said Attwater.

"Did you—did you ever have crime here?" asked Herrick, breaking his silence with a plangent voice.

"Yes," said Attwater, "we did."

"And how did you handle that, sir?" cried the eager captain.

"Well, you see, it was a queer case," replied Attwater. "It was a case that would have puzzled Solomon. Shall I tell it you? Yes?"

The captain rapturously accepted.

"Well," drawled Attwater, "here is what it was. I daresay you know two types of natives, which may be called the obsequious and the sullen? Well, one had them,—the types themselves,—detected in the fact; and one had them together. Obsequiousness ran out of the first, like wine out of a bottle; sullenness congested in the second. Obsequiousness was all smiles; he ran to catch your eye; he loved to gabble; and he had about a dozen words of beach English, and an eighth of an inch veneer of Christianity. Sullens was industrious; a big, down-looking bee. When he was spoken to, he answered with a black look and a shrug of one shoulder, but the thing would be done. I don't give him to you for a model of manners; there was nothing showy about Sullens, but he was strong and steady, and ungraciously obedient. Now, Sullens got into trouble; no matter how; the regulations of the place were broken, and he was punished accord-



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ingly—without effect. So the next day, and the next, and the day after, till I began to be weary of the business, and Sullens (I am afraid) particularly so. There came a day when he was in fault again, for perhaps the thirtieth time; and he rolled a dull eye upon me, with a spark in it and appeared to be about to speak. Now, the regulations of the place are formal upon one point: we allow no explanations. None are received, none allowed to be offered. So one stopped him instantly, but made a note of the circumstance. The next day he was gone from the settlement. There could be nothing more annoying; if the labour took to running away the fishery was wrecked. There are sixty miles of this island, you see, all in length, like the Queen's highway; the idea of pursuit in such a place was a piece of single-minded childishness, which one did not entertain. Two days later I made a discovery. It came in upon me with a flash that Sullens had been unjustly punished from beginning to end, and the real culprit throughout had been Obsequiousness. The native who talks, like the woman who hesitates, is lost. You set him talking and lying, and he talks and lies, and watches your face to see if he has pleased you, till at last out comes the truth! It came out of Obsequiousness in the regular course. I said nothing to him; I dismissed him; and, late as it was, for it was already night, set off to look for Sullens. I had not far



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to go; about two hundred yards up the island the moon showed him to me. He was hanging in a cocoa-palm—I'm not botanist enough to tell you how—but it's the way, in nine cases out of ten, these natives commit suicide. His tongue was out, poor devil, and the birds had got at him. I spare you details; he was an ugly sight! I gave the business six good hours of thinking in this verandah. My justice had been made a fool of. I don't suppose that I was ever angrier. Next day I had the conch sounded and all hands out before sunrise. One took one's gun and led the way with Obsequiousness. He was very talkative; the beggar supposed that all was right, now he had confessed. In the old schoolboy phrase, he was plainly 'sucking up' to me; full of protestations of good-will and good behaviour, to which one answered one really can't remember what. Presently the tree came in sight, and the hanged man. They all burst out lamenting for their comrade in the island way, and Obsequiousness was the loudest of the mourners. He was quite genuine; a noxious creature, without any consciousness of guilt. Well, presently—to make a long story short—one told him to go up the tree. He stared a bit, looked at one with a trouble in his eye, and had rather a sickly smile, but went. He was obedient to the last; he had all the pretty virtues, but the truth was not in him. So soon as he was up, he looked down, and there was the rifle covering him; and at that he



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gave a whimper like a dog. You could hear a pin drop; no more keening now. There they all crouched upon the ground with bulging eyes; there was he in the tree-top, the colour of lead; and between was the dead man, dancing a bit in the air. He was obedient to the last, recited his crime, recommended his soul to God. And then . . ."

Attwater paused, and Herrick, who had been listening attentively, made a convulsive movement which upset his glass.

"And then?" said the breathless captain.

"Shot," said Attwater. "They came to ground together."

Herrick sprang to his feet with a shriek and an insensate gesture.

"It was a murder," he screamed. "A cold-hearted, bloody-minded murder! You monstrous being! Murderer and hypocrite! Murderer and hypocrite! Murderer and hypocrite!" he repeated, and his tongue stumbled among the words.

The captain was by him in a moment. "Herrick!" he cried, "behave yourself! Here, don't be a blame' fool!"

Herrick struggled in his embrace like a frantic child, and suddenly bowing his face in his hands, choked into a sob, the first of many, which now convulsed his body silently, and now jerked from him indescribable and meaningless sounds.

"Your friend appears over-excited," remarked



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Attwater, sitting unmoved, but all alert, at table.

"It must be the wine," replied the captain. "He ain't no drinking man, you see. I—I think I'll take him away. A walk'll sober him up, I guess."

He led him without resistance out of the verandah and into the night, in which they soon melted; but still for some time, as they drew away, his comfortable voice was to be heard soothing and remonstrating, and Herrick answering, at intervals, with the mechanical noises of hysteria.

"'E's like a bloomin' poultry-yard," observed Huish, helping himself to wine (of which he spilled a good deal) with gentlemanly ease. "A man should learn to beyave at table," he added.

"Rather bad form, is it not?" said Attwater. "Well, well, we are left *tête-à-tête*. A glass of wine with you, Mr. Whish!"



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## CHAPTER X

### THE OPEN DOOR

THE captain and Herrick meanwhile turned their backs upon the lights in Attwater's verandah, and took a direction towards the pier and the beach of the lagoon.

The isle, at this hour, with its smooth floor of sand, the pillared roof overhead, and the prevalent illumination of the lamps, wore an air of unreality, like a deserted theatre or a public garden at midnight. A man looked about him for the statues and tables. Not the least air of wind was stirring among the palms, and the silence was emphasised by the continuous clamour of the surf from the sea-shore, as it might be of traffic in the next street.

Still talking, still soothing him, the captain hurried his patient on, brought him at last to the lagoon side, and, leading him down the beach laved his head and face with the tepid water. The paroxysm gradually subsided, the sobs became less convulsive, and then ceased. By an odd but not quite unnatural conjunction, the captain's soothing current of talk died away at



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the same time and by proportional steps, and the pair remained sunk in silence. The lagoon broke at their feet in petty wavelets, and with a sound as delicate as a whisper; stars of all degrees looked down on their own images in the vast mirror; and the more angry colour of the *Farallone's* riding-lamp burned in the middle distance. For long they continued to gaze on the scene before them, and hearken anxiously to the rustle and tinkle of that miniature surf, or the more distant and loud reverberations from the outer coast. For long, speech was denied them; and when the words came at last, they came to both simultaneously.

"Say, Herrick . . ." the captain was beginning.

But Herrick, turning swiftly towards his companion, beat him down with the eager cry: "Let's up anchor, captain, and to sea!"

"Where to, my son?" said the captain. "Up anchor's easy saying. But where to?"

"To sea," responded Herrick. "The sea's big enough! To sea, away from this dreadful island and that—oh—that sinister man!"

"Oh, we'll see about that!" said Davis. "You brace up, and we'll see about that. You're all run down, that's what's wrong with you. You're all nerves like Jemimar. You've got to brace up good, and be yourself again, and then we'll talk."

"To sea," reiterated Herrick; "to sea to-night—now—this moment!"



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"It can't be, my son," replied the captain firmly. "No ship of mine puts to sea without provisions; you can take that for settled."

"You don't seem to understand," said Herrick. "The whole thing is over, I tell you. There is nothing to do here, when he knows all. That man there with the cat knows all. Can't you take it in?"

"All what?" asked the captain, visibly discomposed. "Why, he received us like a perfect gentleman, and treated us real handsome until you began with your foolery; and I must say I've seen men shot for less, and nobody sorry! What more do you expect anyway?"

Herrick rocked to and fro upon the sand, shaking his head.

"Guying us," he said. "He was guying us—only guying us; it's all we're good for."

"There was one queer thing, to be sure," admitted the captain, with a misgiving of the voice; "that about the sherry. Damned if I caught on to that. Say, Herrick, you didn't give me away?"

"Oh! give you away!" repeated Herrick with weary, querulous scorn. "What was there to give away? We're transparent; we've got rascal branded on us; detected rascal—detected rascal! Why, before he came on board, there was the name painted out, and he saw the whole thing. He made sure we would kill him there and then, and stood guying you and Huish on the chance. He calls that being frightened! Next he had me



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ashore; a fine time I had! *The two wolves*, he calls you and Huish. *What is the puppy doing with the two wolves?* he asked. He showed me his pearls; he said they might be dispersed before morning, and *all hung by a hair*—and smiled as he said it; such a smile! Oh, it's no use, I tell you! He knows all; he sees through all. We only make him laugh with our pretences—he looks at us, and laughs like God!"

There was a silence. Davis stood with contorted brows, gazing into the night.

"The pearls?" he said suddenly. "He showed them to you? He has them?"

"No, he didn't show them. I forgot; only the safe they were in," said Herrick. "But you'll never get them!"

"I've two words to say to that," said the captain.

"Do you think he would have been so easy at table unless he was prepared?" cried Herrick. "The servants were both armed. He was armed himself; he always is, he told me. You will never deceive his vigilance. Davis, I know it! It's all up, I tell you, and keep telling you, and proving it. All up; all up! There's nothing for it, there's nothing to be done. All gone—life, honour, love. O my God! my God! why was I born?"

Another pause followed upon this outburst.

The captain put his hands to his brow.

"Another thing!" he broke out. "Why did



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he tell you all this? Seems like madness to me."

Herrick shook his head with gloomy iteration. "You wouldn't understand if I were to tell you," said he.

"I guess I can understand any blame' thing that you can tell me," said the captain.

"Well, then, he's a fatalist," said Herrick.

"What's that—a fatalist?" said Davis.

"Oh, it's a fellow that believes a lot of things," said Herrick. "Believes that his bullets go true; believes that all falls out as God chooses, do as you like to prevent it; and all that."

"Why, I guess I believe right so myself," said Davis.

"You do?" said Herrick.

"You bet I do!" said Davis.

Herrick shrugged his shoulders. "Well, you must be a fool," said he, and he leaned his head upon his knees.

The captain stood biting his hands.

"There's one thing sure," he said at last. "I must get Huish out of that. *He's* not fit to hold his end up with a man like you describe."

And he turned to go away. The words had been quite simple; not so the tone, and the other was quick to catch it.

"Davis!" he cried, "no! Don't do it! Spare *me*, and don't do it! Spare yourself, and leave it alone—for God's sake! for your children's sake!"



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His voice rose to a passionate shrillness; another moment, and he might be overheard by their not distant victim. But Davis turned on him with a savage oath and gesture; and the miserable young man rolled over on his face on the sand, and lay speechless and helpless.

The captain meanwhile set out rapidly for Attwater's house. As he went, he considered with himself eagerly, his thoughts racing. The man had understood; he had mocked them from the beginning. He would teach him to make a mockery of John Davis! Herrick thought him a god. Give him a second to aim in, and the god was overthrown. He chuckled as he felt the butt of his revolver. It should be done now, as he went in. From behind? It was difficult to get there. From across the table? No; the captain preferred to shoot standing, so as you could be sure to get your hand upon your gun. The best would be to summon Huish, and when Attwater stood up and turned—ah, then would be the moment! Wrapped in this ardent prefiguration of events, the captain posted towards the house with his head down.

"Hands up! Halt!" cried the voice of Attwater.

And the captain, before he knew what he was doing, had obeyed. The surprise was complete and irremediable. Coming on the top crest of his murderous intentions, he had walked straight into an ambuscade, and now stood, with his



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hands impotently lifted, staring at the verandah.

The party was now broken up. Attwater leaned on a post, and kept Davis covered with a Winchester. One of the servants was hard by, with a second at the port arms, leaning a little forward, round-eyed with eager expectancy. In the open space at the head of the stair, Huish was partly supported by the other native, his face wreathed in meaningless smiles, his mind seemingly sunk in the contemplation of an unlighted cigar.

"Well," said Attwater, "you seem to me to be a very twopenny pirate!"

The captain uttered a sound in his throat for which we have no name; rage choked him.

"I'm going to give you Mr. Whish—or the winesop that remains of him," continued Attwater. "He talks a great deal when he drinks, Captain Davis of the *Sea Ranger*. But I have quite done with him, and return the article with thanks. Now," he cried sharply, "another false movement like that, and your family will have to deplore the loss of an invaluable parent; keep strictly still, Davis."

Attwater said a word in the native, his eye still undeviatingly fixed on the captain, and the servant thrust Huish smartly forward from the brink of the stair. With an extraordinary simultaneous dispersion of his members, that gentleman bounded forth into space, struck the earth, ricocheted, and brought up with his arms about



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a palm. His mind was quite a stranger to these events. The expression of anguish that deformed his countenance at the moment of the leap was probably mechanical. And he suffered these convulsions in silence; clung to the tree like an infant; and seemed, by his dips, to suppose himself engaged in the pastime of bobbing for apples. A more finely sympathetic mind, or a more observant eye, might have remarked, a little in front of him on the sand, and still quite beyond reach, the unlighted cigar.

"There is your Whitechapel carrion!" said Attwater. "And now you might very well ask me why I do not put a period to you at once, as you deserve. I will tell you why, Davis. It is because I have nothing to do with the *Sea Ranger* and the people you drowned, or the *Farallone* and the champagne that you stole. That is your account with God; He keeps it, and He will settle it when the clock strikes. In my own case, I have nothing to go on but suspicion; and I do not kill on suspicion, not even vermin like you. But understand; if ever I see any of you again, it is another matter, and you shall eat a bullet. And now take yourself off. March! And as you value what you call your life, keep your hands up as you go!"

The captain remained as he was, his hands up, his mouth open, mesmerised with fury.

"March!" said Attwater. "One—two—three!"



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And Davis turned and passed slowly away. But even as he went, he was meditating a prompt, offensive return. In the twinkling of an eye he had leaped behind a tree, and was crouching there, pistol in hand, peering from either side of his place of ambush with bared teeth, a serpent already poised to strike. And already he was too late. Attwater and his servants had disappeared, and only the lamps shone on the deserted table and the bright sand about the house, and threw into the night in all directions the strong and tall shadows of the palms.

Davis ground his teeth. Where were they gone, the cowards? To what hole had they retreated beyond reach? It was in vain he should try anything—he, single, and with a second-hand revolver, against three persons armed with Winchesters, and who did not show an ear out of any of the apertures of that lighted and silent house. Some of them might have already ducked below it from the rear, and be drawing a bead upon him at that moment from the low-browed crypt, the receptacle of empty bottles and broken crockery. No, there was nothing to be done but to bring away (if it were still possible) his shattered and demoralised forces.

"Huish," he said, "come along."

"'s loss my ciga'," said Huish, reaching vaguely forward.

The captain let out a rasping oath. "Come right along here!" said he.



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"'s all righ'. Sleep here 'th Atty—Attwa. Go boar' t'morr'," replied the festive one.

"If you don't come, and come now, by the living God I'll shoot you!" cried the captain.

It is not to be supposed that the sense of these words in any way penetrated to the mind of Huish; rather that, in a fresh attempt upon the cigar, he over-balanced himself, and came flying erratically forward, a course which brought him within reach of Davis.

"Now you walk straight," said the captain, clutching him, "or I'll know why not."

"'s lose my ciga'," replied Huish.

The captain's contained fury blazed up for a moment. He twisted Huish round, grasped him by the neck of the coat, ran him in front of him to the pier-end, and flung him savagely forward on his face.

"Look for your cigar, then, you swine!" said he; and blew his boat-call till the pea in it ceased to rattle.

An immediate activity responded on board the *Farallone;* far-away voices, and soon the sound of oars, floated along the surface of the lagoon; and at the same time, from nearer hand, Herrick aroused himself and strolled languidly up. He bent over the insignificant figure of Huish, where it grovelled, apparently insensible, at the base of the figure-head.

"Dead?" he asked.

"No, he's not dead," said Davis.



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"And Attwater?" asked Herrick.

"Now you just shut your head!" replied Davis. "You can do that, I fancy; and by God, I'll show you how! I'll stand no more of your drivel."

They waited accordingly in silence till the boat bumped on the farthest piers, then raised Huish, head and heels, carried him down the gangway, and flung him summarily in the bottom. On the way out he was heard murmuring of the loss of his cigar; and after he had been handed up the side like baggage, and cast down in the alleyway to slumber, his last audible expression was: "Splen'l fl' Attwa!" This the expert construed into "Splendid fellow, Attwater!" With so much innocence had this great spirit issued from the adventures of the evening.

The captain went and walked in the waist with brief, irate turns; Herrick leaned his arms on the taffrail; the crew had all turned in. The ship had a gentle, cradling motion; at times a block piped like a bird. On shore, through the colonnade of palm stems, Attwater's house was to be seen shining steadily with many lamps. And there was nothing else visible, whether in the heaven above or in the lagoon below, but the stars and their reflections. It might have been minutes or it might have been hours that Herrick leaned there, looking in the glorified water and drinking peace. "A bath of stars," he was thinking, when a hand was laid at last on his shoulder.



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"Herrick," said the captain, "I've been walking off my trouble."

A sharp jar passed through the young man, but he neither answered nor so much as turned his head.

"I guess I spoke a little rough to you on shore," pursued the captain. "The fact is, I was real mad; but now it's over and you and me have to turn to and think."

"I will *not* think," said Herrick.

"Here, old man," said Davis kindly, "this won't fight, you know. You've got to brace up and help me get things straight. You're not going back on a friend? That's not like you, Herrick."

"Oh, yes, it is," said Herrick.

"Come, come!" said the captain, and paused as if quite at a loss. "Look here," he cried, "you have a glass of champagne; *I* won't touch it, so that'll show you if I'm in earnest. But it's just the pick-me-up for you; it'll put an edge on you at once."

"Oh, you leave me alone," said Herrick, and turned away.

The captain caught him by the sleeve, and Herrick shook him off and turned on him, for the moment, like a demoniac.

"Go to hell in your own way!" he cried.

And he turned away again, this time unchecked, and stepped forward to where the boat rocked alongside, and ground occasionally against



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the schooner. He looked about him; a corner of the house was interposed between the captain and himself; all was well; no eye must see him in that last act. He slid silently into the boat, thence silently into the starry water. Instinctively he swam a little; it would be time enough to stop by and by.

The shock of the immersion brightened his mind immediately; the events of the ignoble day passed before him in a frieze of pictures; and he thanked "whatever gods there be" for that open door of suicide. In such a little while he would be done with it, the random business at an end, the prodigal son come home. A very bright planet shone before him and drew a trenchant wake along the water. He took that for his line and followed it; that was the last earthly thing that he should look upon; that radiant speck, which he had soon magnified into a city of Laputa, along whose terraces there walked men and women of awful and benignant features, who viewed him with distant commiseration. These imaginary spectators consoled him; he told himself their talk, one to another; it was of himself and his sad destiny.

From such flights of fancy he was aroused by the growing coldness of the water. Why should he delay? Here, where he was now, let him drop the curtain, let him seek the ineffable refuge, let him lie down with all races and generations of men in the house of sleep. It was easy to say,



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easy to do. To stop swimming—there was no mystery in that, if he could do it. Could he? And he could not. He knew it instantly. He was aware instantly of an opposition in his members, unanimous and invincible, clinging to life with a single and fixed resolve, finger by finger, sinew by sinew; something that was at once he and not he; at once within and without him; the shutting of some miniature valve in his brain, which a single manly thought should suffice to open; and the grasp of an external fate ineluctable as gravity. To any man there may come at times a consciousness that there blows through all the articulations of his body the wind of a spirit not wholly his; that his mind rebels; that another girds him and carries him whither he would not. It came now to Herrick, with the authority of a revelation. There was no escape possible. The open door was closed in his recreant face. He must go back into the world and amongst men without illusion. He must stagger on to the end with the pack of his responsibility and his disgrace, until a cold, a blow, a merciful chance ball, or the more merciful hangman, should dismiss him from his infamy. There were men who could commit suicide; there were men who could not; and he was one who could not.

For perhaps a minute there raged in his mind the coil of this discovery; then cheerless certitude followed, and, with an incredible simplicity



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of submission to ascertained fact, he turned round and struck out for shore. There was a courage in this which he could not appreciate, the ignobility of his cowardice wholly occupying him. A strong current set against him like a wind in his face; he contended with it heavily, wearily, without enthusiasm, but with substantial advantage; marking his progress the while without pleasure, by the outline of the trees. Once he had a moment of hope. He heard to the southward of him, towards the centre of the lagoon, the wallowing of some great fish, doubtless a shark, and paused for a little, treading water. Might not this be the hangman? he thought. But the wallowing died away; mere silence succeeded; and Herrick pushed out again for the shore, raging as he went at his own nature. Ay, he would wait for the shark; but if he had heard him coming! . . . His smile was tragic. He could have spat upon himself.

About three in the morning, chance and the set of the current, and the bias of his own right-handed body, so decided it between them that he came to shore upon the beach in front of Attwater's. There he sat down, and looked forth into a world without any of the lights of hope. The poor diving-dress of self-conceit was sadly tattered. With the fairy tale of suicide, of a refuge always open to him, he had hitherto beguiled and supported himself in the trials of life; and behold! that also was only a fairy tale; that



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also was folk-lore. With the consequences of his acts he saw himself implacably confronted for the duration of life, stretched upon a cross, and nailed there with the iron bolts of his own cowardice. He had no tears, he told himself no stories. His disgust with himself was so complete, that even the process of apologetic mythology had ceased. He was like a man cast down from a pillar and every bone broken; he lay there, and admitted the facts, and did not attempt to rise.

Dawn began to break over the far side of the atoll, the sky brightened, the clouds became dyed with gorgeous colours, the shadows of the night lifted. And suddenly Herrick was aware that the lagoon and the trees wore again their daylight livery; and he saw, on board the *Farallone*, Davis extinguishing the lantern, and smoke rising from the galley.

Davis, without doubt, remarked and recognised the figure on the beach—or, perhaps, hesitated to recognise it—for after he had gazed a long while from under his hand, he went into the house and fetched a glass. It was very powerful; Herrick had often used it. With an instinct of shame, he hid his face in his hands.

"And what brings you here, Mr. Herrick-Hay, or Mr. Hay-Herrick?" asked the voice of Attwater. "Your back view from my present position is remarkably fine, and I would continue to present it. We can get on very nicely as we are,



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and if you were to turn round, do you know, I think it would be awkward."

Herrick slowly rose to his feet; his heart throbbed hard; a hideous excitement shook him, but he was master of himself. Slowly he turned and faced Attwater and the muzzle of a pointed rifle. "Why could I not do that last night?" he thought.

"Well, why don't you fire?" he said aloud, with a voice that trembled.

Attwater slowly put his gun under his arm, then his hands in his pockets.

"What brings you here?" he repeated.

"I don't know," said Herrick; and then, with a cry, "Can you do anything with me?"

"Are you armed?" said Attwater. "I ask for the form's sake."

"Armed? No!" said Herrick. "Oh, yes, I am, too!"

And he flung upon the beach a dripping pistol.

"You are wet," said Attwater.

"Yes, I am wet," said Herrick. "Can you do anything with me?"

Attwater read his face attentively.

"It would depend a good deal upon what you are," said he.

"What I am? A coward!" said Herrick.

"There is very little to be done with that," said Attwater. "And yet the description hardly strikes one as exhaustive."

"Oh! what does it matter?" cried Herrick.



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"Here I am. I am broken crockery; the whole of my life is gone to water; I have nothing left that I believe in, except my living horror of myself. Why do I come to you? I don't know. You are cold, cruel, hateful; and I hate you, or I think I hate you. But you are an honest man, an honest gentleman. I put myself helpless in your hands. What must I do? If I can't do anything, be merciful, and put a bullet through me; it's only a puppy with a broken leg!"

"If I were you, I would pick up that pistol, come up to the house, and put on some dry clothes," said Attwater.

"If you really mean it?" said Herrick. "You know they—we—they—— But you know all."

"I know quite enough," said Attwater. "Come up to the house."

And the captain, from the deck of the *Farallone*, saw the two men pass together under the shadow of the grove.



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## CHAPTER XI

### DAVID AND GOLIATH

HUISH had bundled himself up from the glare of the day, his face to the house, his knees retracted. The frail bones in the thin tropical raiment seemed scarce more considerable than a fowl's; and Davis, sitting on the rail, with his arm about a stay, contemplated him with gloom, wondering what manner of counsel that insignificant figure should contain. For since Herrick had thrown him off and deserted to the enemy, Huish, alone of mankind, remained to him to be a helper and oracle.

He considered their position with a sinking heart. The ship was a stolen ship; the stores, whether from initial carelessness or ill administration during the voyage, were insufficient to carry them to any port except back to Papeete; and there retribution waited in the shape of a *gendarme*, a judge with a queer-shaped hat, and the horror of distant Noumea. Upon that side there was no glimmer of hope. Here, at the island, the dragon was roused: Attwater with his men and his Winchesters watched and pa-



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trolled the house; let him who dare approach it. What else was then left but to sit there inactive, pacing the decks, until the *Trinity Hall* arrived, and they were cast into irons, or until the food came to an end, and the pangs of famine succeeded? For the *Trinity Hall* Davis was prepared. He would barricade the house, and die there, defending it, like a rat in a crevice. But for the other? The cruise of the *Farallone*, into which he had plunged, only a fortnight before, with such golden expectations, could this be the nightmare end of it? The ship rotting at anchor, the crew stumbling and dying in the scuppers? It seemed as if any extreme of hazard were to be preferred to so grisly a certainty; as if it would be better to up-anchor, after all, put to sea at a venture, and perhaps perish at the hands of cannibals on one of the more obscure Paumotus. His eye roved swiftly over sea and sky in quest of any promise of wind, but the fountains of the Trade were empty. Where it had run yesterday, and for weeks before, a roaring blue river charioting clouds, silence now reigned, and the whole height of the atmosphere stood balanced. On the endless ribbon of island that stretched out to either hand of him its array of golden and green and silvery palms, not the most volatile frond was to be seen stirring; they drooped to their stable images in the lagoon like things carved of metal, and already their long line began to reverberate heat. There was no escape possible that



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day, none probable on the morrow. And still the stores were running out.

Then came over Davis, from deep down in the roots of his being, or at least from far back among his memories of childhood and innocence, a wave of superstition. This run of ill-luck was something beyond natural; the chances of the game were in themselves more various; it seemed as if the devil must serve the pieces. The devil? He heard again the clear note of Attwater's bell ringing abroad into the night, and dying away. How, if God . . . ?

Briskly he averted his mind. Attwater—that was the point. Attwater had food and a treasure of pearls, escape made possible in the present, riches in the future. They must come to grips with Attwater; the man must die. A smoky heat went over his face as he recalled the impotent figure he had made last night, and the contemptuous speeches he must bear in silence. Rage, shame, and the love of life all pointed the one way; and only invention halted. How to reach him? Had he strength enough? Was there any help in that misbegotten packet of bones against the house?

His eyes dwelled upon him with a strange avidity, as though he would read into his soul; and presently the sleeper moved, stirred uneasily, turned suddenly round, and threw him a blinking look. Davis maintained the same dark stare, and Huish looked away again and sat up.



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"Lord, I've an 'eadache on me!" said he. "I believe I was a bit swipey last night. W'ere's that cry-byby 'Errick?"

"Gone," said the captain.

"Ashore?" cried Huish. "Oh, I say, I'd 'a' gone, too."

"Would you?" said the captain.

"Yes, I would," replied Huish. "I like Attwater; 'e's all right; we got on like one o'clock when you were gone. And ain't his sherry in it rather? It's like Spiers and Pond's Amontillado! I wish I 'ad a drain of it now," he sighed.

"Well, you'll never get no more of it, that's one thing," said Davis gravely.

"'Ere! wot's wrong with you, Dyvis? Coppers 'ot? Well, look at *me! I* ain't grumpy," said Huish. "I'm as plyful as a canyry-bird, I am."

"Yes," said Davis, "you're playful, I own that; and you were playful last night, I believe, and a damned fine performance you made of it."

"'Allo!" said Huish. "'Ow's this? Wot performance?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the captain, getting slowly off the rail.

And he did, at full length, with every wounding epithet and absurd detail repeated and emphasised; he had his own vanity and Huish's upon the grill and roasted them; and as he spoke he inflicted and endured agonies of humiliation. It was a plain man's masterpiece of the sardonic.



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"What do you think of it?" said he, when he had done, and looked down at Huish, flushed and serious, and yet jeering.

"I'll tell you wot it is," was the reply, "you and me cut a pretty dicky figure."

"That's so," said Davis; "a pretty measly figure, by God! And, by God! I want to see that man at my knees."

"Ah!" said Huish. "'Ow to get him there?"

"That's it!" cried Davis. "How to get hold of him! They're four to two, though there's only one man among them to count, and that's Attwater. Get a bead on Attwater, and the others would cut and run and sing out like frightened poultry, and old man Herrick would come round with his hat for a share of the pearls. No, *sir!* It's how to get hold of Attwater! And we daren't even go ashore. He would shoot us in the boat like dogs."

"Are you particular about having him dead or alive?" asked Huish.

"I want to see him dead," said the captain.

"Ah, well," said Huish. "Then I believe I'll do a bit of breakfast."

And he turned into the house.

The captain doggedly followed him.

"What's this?" he asked. "What's your idea, anyway?"

"Oh, you let me alone, will you?" said Huish, opening a bottle of champagne. "You'll 'ear my idea soon enough. Wyte till I pour some



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cham on my 'ot coppers." He drank a glass off, and affected to listen. "'Ark!" said he, "'ear it fizz. Like 'am fryin', I declyre. 'Ave a glass, do, and look sociable."

"No," said the captain, with emphasis. "No, I will not! There's business."

"You p'ys your money and you tykes your choice, my little man," returned Huish. "Seems rather a shyme to me to spoil your breakfast for wot's really ancient 'istory."

He finished three parts of a bottle of champagne and nibbled a corner of biscuit with extreme deliberation, the captain sitting opposite and champing the bit like an impatient horse. Then Huish leaned his arms on the table and looked Davis in the face.

"W'en you're ready," said he.

"Well, now, what's your idea?" said Davis, with a sigh.

"Fair play!" said Huish. "What's yours?"

"The trouble is that I've got none," replied Davis; and wandered for some time in aimless discussion of the difficulties in their path, and useless explanations of his own fiasco.

"About done!" said Huish.

"I'll dry up right here," replied Davis.

"Well, then," said Huish, "you give me your 'and across the table, and say: 'Gawd strike me dead if I don't back you up.'"

His voice was hardly raised, yet it thrilled the hearer. His face seemed the epitome of cunning,



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and the captain recoiled from it as from a blow.

"What for?" said he.

"Luck," said Huish. "Substantial guarantee demanded."

And he continued to hold out his hand.

"I don't see the good of any such tomfoolery," said the other.

"I do, though," returned Huish. "Gimme your 'and and say the words, then you'll 'ear my view of it. Don't, and you don't."

The captain went through the required form, breathing short, and gazing on the clerk with anguish. What to fear he knew not; yet he feared slavishly what was to fall from these pale lips.

"Now, if you'll excuse me 'alf a second," said Huish, "I'll go and fetch the byby."

"The baby?" said Davis. "What's that?"

"Fragile. With care. This side up," replied the clerk, with a wink, as he disappeared.

He returned, smiling to himself, and carrying in his hand a silk handkerchief. The long stupid wrinkles ran up Davis's brow as he saw it. What should it contain? He could think of nothing more recondite than a revolver.

Huish resumed his seat.

"Now," said he, "are you man enough to take charge of 'Errick and the niggers? Because I'll take care of Hattwater."

"How?" cried Davis. "You can't!"

"Tut, tut," said the clerk. "You gimme time. Wot's the first point? The first point is,



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that we can't get ashore; and I'll make you a present of that for a 'ard one. But 'ow about a flag of truce? Would that do the trick, d'ye think, or would Attwater simply blyze aw'y at us in the bloomin' boat like dawgs?"

"No," said Davis, "I don't believe he would."

"No more do I," said Huish. "I don't believe he would either; and I'm sure I 'ope he won't. So then you can call us ashore. Next point is to get near the managin' direction. And for that I'm going to 'ave you write a letter, in w'ich you s'y you're ashymed to meet his eye, and that the bearer, Mr. J. L. 'Uish, is empowered to represent you; armed with w'ich seemin'ly simple expedient, Mr. J. L. 'Uish will proceed to business."

He paused, like one who had finished, but still held Davis with his eye.

"How?" said Davis. "Why?"

"Well, you see, you're big," returned Huish; "'e knows you 'ave a gun in your pocket, and anybody can see with 'alf an eye that you ain't the man to 'esitate about usin' it. So it's no go with you, and never was; you're out of the runnin', Dyvis. But he won't be afryde of me, I'm such a little un. I'm unarmed—no kid about that—and I'll 'old my 'ands up right enough." He paused. "If I can manage to sneak up nearer to him as we talk," he resumed, "you look out and back me up smart. If I don't, we go aw'y again, and nothink to 'urt. See?"



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The captain's face was contorted by the frenzied effort to comprehend.

"No, I don't see," he cried. "I can't see. What do you mean?"

"I mean to do for the beast!" cried Huish, in a burst of venomous triumph. "I'll bring the 'ulkin' bully to grass. He's 'ad his larks out of me: I'm goin' to 'ave my lark out of 'im; and a good lark, too!"

"What is it?" said the captain, almost in a whisper.

"Sure you want to know?" asked Huish.

Davis rose and took a turn in the house.

"Yes, I want to know," he said at last, with an effort.

"W'en your back's at the wall, you do the best you can, don't you?" began the clerk. "I s'y that, because I 'appen to know there's a prejudice against it; it's considered vulgar, awf'ly vulgar." He unrolled the handkerchief and showed a four-ounce jar. "This 'ere's vitriol, this is," said he.

The captain stared upon him with a whitening face.

"This is the stuff!" he pursued, holding it up. "This'll burn to the bone; you'll see it smoke upon 'im like 'ell fire. One drop upon 'is bloomin' heyesight, and I'll trouble you for Attwater!"

"No, no, by God!" exclaimed the captain.

"Now, see 'ere, ducky," said Huish, "this is



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my bean-feast, I believe? I'm goin' up to that man single-'anded, I am. 'E's about seven foot high and I'm five foot one. 'E's a rifle in his 'and, 'e's on the look-out; 'e wasn't born yesterday. This is Dyvid and Goliar, I tell you. If I 'ad ast you to walk up and face the music I could understand. But I don't. I on'y ast you to stand by and spifflicate the niggers. It'll all come in quite natural; you'll see, else! Fust thing you know you'll see him running round and 'owling like a good un . . ."

"Don't!" said Davis. "Don't talk of it!"

"Well, you *are* a juggins!" exclaimed Huish. "What did you want? You wanted to kill him, and tried to last night. You wanted to kill the 'ole lot of them, and tried to, and 'ere I show you 'ow; and because there's some medicine in a bottle, you kick up this fuss!"

"I suppose that's so," said Davis. "It don't seem someways reasonable, only there it is."

"It's the happlication of science, I suppose?" sneered Huish.

"I don't know what it is," cried Davis, pacing the floor. "It's there; I draw the line at it. I can't put a finger to no such piggishness; it's too damned hateful!"

"And I suppose it's all your fancy pynted it," said Huish, "w'en you take a pistol and a bit o' lead, and copse a man's brains all over him? No accountin' for tystes."

"I'm not denying it," said Davis; "it's some-



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thing here, inside of me. It's foolishness; I daresay it's damn foolishness. I don't argue, I just draw the line. Isn't there no other way?"

"Look for yourself," said Huish. "I ain't wedded to this, if you think I am. I ain't ambitious. I don't make a point of playin' the lead. I offer to, that's all; and if you can't show me better, by Gawd, I'm goin' to!"

"Then the risk!" cried Davis.

"If you ast me stryte, I should say it was a case of seven to one and no tykers," said Huish. "But that's my look-out, ducky, and I'm gyme. Look at me, Dyvis; there ain't any shilly-shally about me. I'm gyme, that's what I am; gyme all through."

The captain looked at him. Huish sat there, preening his sinister vanity, glorying in his precedency in evil; and the villainous courage and readiness of the creature shone out of him like a candle from a lantern. Dismay and a kind of respect seized hold on Davis in his own despite. Until that moment he had seen the clerk always hanging back, always listless, uninterested, and openly grumbling at a word of anything to do; and now, by the touch of an enchanter's wand, he beheld him sitting girt and resolved, and his face radiant. He had raised the devil, he thought, and asked who was to control him, and his spirits quailed.

"Look as long as you like," Huish was going on. "You don't see any green in my eye. I



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ain't afryde of Attwater, I ain't afryde of you, and I ain't afryde of words. You want to kill people, that's wot *you* want; but you want to do it in kid gloves, and it can't be done that w'y. Murder ain't genteel, it ain't easy, it ain't safe, and it tykes a man to do it. 'Ere's the man."

"Huish!" began the captain with energy, and then stopped, and remained staring at him with corrugated brows.

"Well, hout with it," said Huish. "'Ave you anythink else to put up? Is there any other chanst to try?"

The captain held his peace.

"There you are, then," said Huish, with a shrug.

Davis fell again to his pacing.

"Oh, you may do sentry-go till you're blue in the mug; you won't find anythink else," said Huish.

There was a little silence; the captain, like a man launched on a swing, flying dizzily among extremes of conjecture and refusal.

"But see," he said, suddenly pausing. "Can you? Can the thing be done? It—it can't be easy."

"If I get within twenty foot of 'im it'll be done; so you look out," said Huish, and his tone of certainty was absolute.

"How can you know that?" broke from the captain in a choked cry. "You beast, I believe you've done it before!"



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"Oh, that's private allyres," returned Huish. "I ain't a talking man."

A shock of repulsion struck and shook the captain. A scream rose almost to his lips; had he uttered it, he might have cast himself at the same moment on the debile body of Huish, might have picked him up, and flung him down, and wiped the cabin with him in a frenzy of cruelty that seemed half moral; but the moment passed, and the abortive crisis left the man weaker. The stakes were so high,—the pearls on the one hand, starvation and shame on the other. Ten years of pearls! The imagination of Davis translated them into a new, glorified existence for himself and his family. The seat of this new life must be in London,—there were deadly reasons against Portland, Maine,—and the pictures that came to him were of English manners. He saw his boys marching in the procession of a school, with gowns on, an usher marshalling them, and reading as he walked in a great book. He was installed in a villa, semi-detached, the name, *Rosemore*, on the gate-posts. In a chair on the gravel walk he seemed to sit smoking a cigar, a blue ribbon in his buttonhole, victor over himself and circumstances and the malignity of bankers. He saw the parlour with red curtains, and shells on the mantel-piece; and, with the fine inconsistency of visions, mixed a grog at the mahogany table ere he turned in. With that the *Farallone* gave one of the aimless and nameless



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movements which (even in an anchored ship and even in the most profound calm) remind one of the mobility of fluids; and he was back again under the cover of the house, the fierce daylight besieging it all round and glaring in the chinks, and the clerk, in a rather airy attitude, awaiting his decision.

He began to walk again. He aspired after the realisation of these dreams, like a horse nickering for water; the lust of them burned in his inside; and the only obstacle was Attwater, who had insulted him from the first. He gave Herrick a full share of the pearls; he insisted on it. Huish opposed him, and he trod the opposition down, and praised himself exceedingly. He was not going to use vitriol himself. Was he Huish's keeper? It was a pity he had asked, but after all! . . . he saw the boys again in the school procession, with the gowns he had thought to be so "tony" long since. . . . And at the same time the incomparable shame of the last evening blazed up in his mind.

"Have it your own way," he said hoarsely.

"Oh, I knew you would walk up," said Huish. "Now for the letter. There's paper, pens, and ink. Sit down, and I'll dictyte."

The captain took a seat and the pen, looked a while helplessly at the paper, then at Huish. The swing had gone the other way; there was a blur upon his eyes. "It's a dreadful business," he said, with a strong twitch of his shoulders.



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"It's rather a start, no doubt," said Huish. "Tyke a dip of ink. That's it. *William John Hattwater, Esq., Sir:*" he dictated.

"How do you know his name is William John?" asked Davis.

"Saw it on a packing-case," said Huish. "Got that?"

"No," said Davis. "But there's another thing. What are we to write?"

"Oh my golly!" cried the exasperated Huish. "Wot kind of man do *you* call yourself? *I'm* goin' to tell you wot to write—that's *my* pitch—if you'll just be so bloomin' condescendin' as to write it down! *William John Hattwater, Esq., Sir:*" he reiterated. And the captain at last beginning half mechanically to move his pen, the dictation proceeded: "*It is with feelin's of shyme and 'artfelt contrition that I approach you after the yumiliatin' events of last night. Our Mr. 'Errick has left the ship, and will have doubtless communicated to you the nature of our 'opes. Needless to s'y, these are no longer possible. Fate 'as declyred against us, and we bow the 'ead. Well awyre as I am of the just suspicions with w'ich I am regarded, I do not venture to solicit the fyvour of an interview for myself; but in order to put an end to a situytion w'ich must be equally pyneful to all, I 'ave deputed my friend and partner, Mr. J. L. Huish, to l'y before you my proposals, and w'ich by their moderytion will, I trust, be found to merit your attention. Mr. J. L. Huish is entirely un-*



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*armed, I swear to Gawd! and will 'old 'is 'ands over 'is 'ead from the moment he begins to approach you. I am your fytheful servant, John Dyvis.*"

Huish read the letter with the innocent joy of amateurs, chuckled gustfully to himself, and reopened it more than once after it was folded, to repeat the pleasure; Davis meanwhile sitting inert and heavily frowning.

Of a sudden he rose; he seemed all abroad. "No!" he cried. "No! It can't be! It's too much! It's damnation! God would never forgive it!"

"Well, and 'oo wants him to?" returned Huish, shrill with fury. "You were damned years ago for the *Sea Rynger*, and said so yourself. Well, then, be damned for something else, and 'old your tongue."

The captain looked at him mistily. "No," he pleaded, "no, old man, don't do it."

"'Ere now," said Huish, "I'll give you my ultimytum. Go or st'y w'ere you are; I don't mind; I'm goin' to see that man and chuck this vitriol in his eyes. If you st'y I'll go alone; the niggers will likely knock me on the 'ead, and a fat lot you'll be the better! But there's one thing sure: I'll 'ear no more of your moonin', mullygrubbin' rot, and tyke it stryte."

The captain took it with a blink and a gulp. Memory, with phantom voices, repeated in his ears something similar, something he had once said to Herrick, years ago, it seemed.



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"Now, gimme over your pistol," said Huish. "I 'ave to see all clear. Six shots, and mind you don't wyste them."

The captain, like a man in a nightmare, laid down his revolver on the table, and Huish wiped the cartridges and oiled the works.

It was close on noon: there was no breath of wind, and the heat was scarce bearable when the two men came on deck, had the boat manned, and passed down, one after another, into the stern-sheets. A white shirt at the end of an oar served as a flag of truce; and the men, by direction, and to give it the better chance to be observed, pulled with extreme slowness. The isle shook before them like a place incandescent; on the face of the lagoon blinding copper suns, no bigger than sixpences, danced and stabbed them in the eyeball. There went up from sand and sea, and even from the boat, a glare of scathing brightness; and as they could only peer abroad from between closed lashes, the excess of light seemed to be changed into a sinister darkness, comparable to that of a thunder-cloud before it bursts.

The captain had come upon this errand for any one of a dozen reasons, the last of which was desire for its success. Superstition rules all men; semi-ignorant and gross natures, like that of Davis, it rules utterly. For murder he had been prepared; but this horror of the medicine in the bottle went beyond him, and he seemed to



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himself to be parting the last strands that united him to God. The boat carried him on to reprobation, to damnation; and he suffered himself to be carried, passively consenting, silently bidding farewell to his better self and his hopes.

Huish sat by his side in towering spirits that were not wholly genuine. Perhaps as brave a man as ever lived, brave as a weasel, he must still reassure himself with the tones of his own voice; he must play his part to exaggeration, he must out-Herod Herod, insult all that was respectable, and brave all that was formidable, in a kind of desperate wager with himself. So the young soldier may jest as he goes into the battle; so perhaps, of old, the highwaymen blasphemed on the scaffold.

"Golly, but it's 'ot!" said he. "Cruel 'ot, I call it. Nice d'y to get your gruel in! I s'y, you know, it must feel awf'ly peculiar to get bowled over on a d'y like this. I'd rather have it on a cowld and frosty morning, wouldn't you? [Singing]. *'Ere we go round the mulberry bush on a cowld and frosty mornin'*. [Spoken.] Give you my word, I 'aven't thought o' that in ten years; used to sing it at a hinfant school in 'Ackney—'Ackney Wick it was. [Singing.] *This is the way the tyler does, the tyler does.* [Spoken.] Bloomin' 'umbug. 'Ow are you off now, for the notion of a future styte? Do you cotton to the tea-fight view, or the old red-'ot bogey business?"



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"Oh, dry up," said the captain.

"No, but I want to know," said Huish. "It's within the sp'ere of practical politics for you and me, my boy; we may both be bowled over, one up, t'other down, within the next ten minutes. It would be rather a lark, now, if you only skipped across, came up smilin' t'other side, and a hangel met you with a B.- and S.- under his wing. 'Ullo, you'd s'y: come! I tyke this kind."

The captain groaned. While Huish was thus airing and exercising his bravado, the man at his side was actually engaged in prayer. Prayer, what for? God knows. But out of his inconsistent, illogical, agitated spirit, a stream of supplication was poured forth, inarticulate as himself, earnest as death and judgment.

"Thou Gawd seest me!" continued Huish. "I remember I had that written in my Bible. I remember the Bible, too, all about Abinadab and parties. Well, Gawd!" said he, apostrophising the meridian, "you're goin' to see a rum start presently, I promise you that!"

The captain bounded.

"I'll have no blasphemy!" he cried, "no blasphemy in my boat."

"All right, cap," said Huish. "Anythink to oblige. Any other topic you would like to sudgest, the rynegyge, the lightnin'-rod, Shykespeare, or the musical glasses? 'Ere's conversytion on tap. Put a penny in the slot, and . . .



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'ullo! 'ere they are!" he cried. "Now or never! Is 'e goin' to shoot?"

And the little man straightened himself into an alert and dashing attitude, and looked steadily at the enemy.

But the captain rose half up in the boat, with eyes protruding.

"What's that?" he cried.

"Wot's wot?" said Huish.

"Those blamed things," said the captain.

And indeed it was something strange. Herrick and Attwater, both armed with Winchesters, had appeared out of the grove behind the figure-head; and to either hand of them, the sun glistened upon two metallic objects, locomotory like men, and occupying in the economy of these creatures the places of heads,—only the heads were faceless. To Davis, hit between wind and water, his mythology appeared to have come alive, and Tophet to be vomiting demons. But Huish was not mystified a moment.

"Divers' 'elmets, you ninny! Can't you see?" he said.

"So they are," said Davis, with a gasp. "And why? Oh, I see, it's for armour."

"Wot did I tell you?" said Huish. "Dyvid and Goliar all the w'y and back."

The two natives (for they it was that were equipped in this unusual panoply of war) spread out to right and left, and at last lay down in the shade, on the extreme flank of the position. Even



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hatefully pre-occupied, stared at the flame on their crests, and forgot, and then remembered with a smile, the explanation.

Attwater withdrew again into the grove, and Herrick, with his gun under his arm, came down the pier alone. About halfway down he halted and hailed the boat.

"What do you want?" he cried.

"I'll tell that to Mr. Attwater," replied Huish, stepping briskly on the ladder. "I don't tell it to you, because you plyed the trucklin' sneak. Here's a letter for him; tyke it, and give it, and be 'anged to you!"

"Davis, is this all right?" said Herrick.

Davis raised his chin, glanced swiftly at Herrick and away again, and held his peace. The glance was charged with some deep emotion, but whether of hatred or fear, it was beyond Herrick to divine.

"Well," he said, "I'll give the letter." He drew a score with his foot on the boards of the gangway. "Till I bring the answer, don't move a step past this."

And he returned to where Attwater leaned against a tree, and gave him the letter. Attwater glanced it through.

"What does that mean?" he asked, passing it to Herrick. "Treachery?"

"Oh, I suppose so," said Herrick.

"Well, tell him to come on," said Attwater.

"One isn't a fatalist for nothing. Tell him to come on and to look out."

Herrick returned to the figure-head. Halfway down the pier the clerk was waiting, with Davis by his side.

"You are to come along, Huish," said Herrick. "He bids you look out, no tricks."

Huish walked briskly up the pier, and paused face to face with the young man.

"W'ere is 'e?" said he, and to Herrick's surprise, the low-bred, insignificant face before him flushed suddenly crimson and went white again.

"Right forward," said Herrick, pointing. "Now, your hands above your head."

The clerk turned away from him and towards the figure-head, as though he were about to address to it his devotions—he was seen to heave a deep breath—and raised his arms. In common with many men of his unhappy physical endowments, Huish's hands were disproportionately long and broad, and the palms in particular enormous; a four-ounce jar was nothing in that capacious fist. The next moment he was plodding steadily forward on his mission.

Herrick at first followed. Then a noise in his rear startled him, and he turned about, to find Davis already advanced as far as the figure-head. He came, crouching and open-mouthed, as the mesmerised may follow the mesmeriser; all human considerations, and even the care of his



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own life, swallowed up in one abominable and burning curiosity.

"Halt!" cried Herrick, covering him with his rifle. "Davis, what are you doing, man? *You* are not to come."

Davis instinctively paused, and regarded him with a dreadful vacancy of eye.

"Put your back to that figure-head, do you hear me? and stand fast!" said Herrick.

The captain fetched a breath, stepped back against the figure-head, and instantly redirected his glances after Huish.

There was a hollow place of the sand in that part, and as it were a glade among the cocoa-palms, in which the direct noonday sun blazed intolerably. At the far end, in the shadow, the tall figure of Attwater was to be seen leaning on a tree. Towards him, with his hands over his head, and his steps smothered in the sand, the clerk painfully waded. The surrounding glare threw out and exaggerated the man's smallness; it seemed no less perilous an enterprise, this that he was gone upon, than for a whelp to besiege a citadel.

"There, Mr. Whish. That will do," cried Attwater. "From that distance, and keeping your hands up like a good boy, you can very well put me in possession of the skipper's views."

The interval betwixt them was perhaps forty feet; and Huish measured it with his eye, and breathed a curse. He was already distressed



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with labouring in the loose sand, and his arms ached bitterly from their unnatural position. In the palm of his right hand, the jar was ready; and his heart thrilled, and his voice choked, as he began to speak.

"Mr. Hattwater," said he, "I don't know if ever you 'ad a mother——"

"I can set your mind at rest: I had," returned Attwater; "and henceforth, if I might venture to suggest it, her name need not recur in our communications. I should perhaps tell you that I am not amenable to the pathetic."

"I am sorry, sir, if I 'ave seemed to tresparse on your private feelin's," said the clerk, cringing and stealing a step. "At least, sir, you will never pe'suade me that you are not a perfec' gentleman. I know a gentleman when I see him; and as such, I 'ave no 'esitation in throwin' myself on your merciful consideration. It *is* 'ard lines, no doubt; it's 'ard lines to have to hown yourself beat; it's 'ard lines to 'ave to come and beg to you for charity."

"When, if things had only gone right, the whole place was as good as your own?" suggested Attwater. "I can understand the feeling."

"You are judging me, Mr. Attwater," said the clerk, "and Gawd knows how unjustly! '*Thou Gawd seest me*,' was the tex' I 'ad in my Bible, w'ich my father wrote it in with 'is own 'and upon the fly leaft."

"I am sorry I have to beg your pardon once



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more," said Attwater; "but do you know, you seem to me to be a trifle nearer, which is entirely outside of our bargain. And I would venture to suggest that you take one—two—three—steps back; and stay there."

The devil, at this staggering disappointment, looked out of Huish's face, and Attwater was swift to suspect. He frowned, he stared on the little man, and considered. Why should he be creeping nearer? The next moment his gun was at his shoulder.

"Kindly oblige me by opening your hands. Open your hands wide—let me see the fingers spread, you dog—throw down that thing you're holding!" he roared, his rage and certitude increasing together.

And then, at almost the same moment, the indomitable Huish decided to throw, and Attwater pulled the trigger. There was scarce the difference of a second between the two resolves, but it was in favour of the man with the rifle; and the jar had not yet left the clerk's hand, before the ball shattered both. For the twinkling of an eye, the wretch was in hell's agonies, bathed in liquid flames, a screaming bedlamite; and then a second and more merciful bullet stretched him dead.

The whole thing was come and gone in a breath. Before Herrick could turn about, before Davis could complete his cry of horror, the clerk lay in the sand, sprawling and convulsed.



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Attwater ran to the body; he stooped and viewed it; he put his finger in the vitriol, and his face whitened and hardened with anger.

Davis had not yet moved; he stood astonished, with his back to the figure-head, his hands clutching it behind him, his body inclined forward from the waist.

Attwater turned deliberately and covered him with his rifle.

"Davis," he cried, in a voice like a trumpet, "I give you sixty seconds to make your peace with God."

Davis looked, and his mind awoke. He did not dream of self-defence, he did not reach for his pistol. He drew himself up instead to face death, with a quivering nostril.

"I guess I'll not trouble the Old Man," he said. "Considering the job I was on, I guess it's better business to just shut my face."

Attwater fired; there came a spasmodic movement of the victim, and immediately above the middle of his forehead, a black hole marred the whiteness of the figure-head. A dreadful pause; then again the report, and the solid sound and jar of the bullet in the wood; and this time the captain had felt the wind of it along his cheek. A third shot, and he was bleeding from one ear; and along the levelled rifle, Attwater smiled like a Red Indian.

The cruel game of which he was the puppet was now clear to Davis; three times he had



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drunk of death, and he must look to drink of it seven times more before he was despatched. He held up his hand.

"Steady!" he cried, "I'll take your sixty seconds."

"Good!" said Attwater.

The captain shut his eyes tight, like a child; he held his hands up at last with a tragic and ridiculous gesture.

"My God, for Christ's sake, look after my two kids," he said; and then after a pause and a falter, "for Christ's sake. Amen."

And he opened his eyes and looked down the rifle with a quivering mouth.

"But don't keep fooling me long!" he pleaded.

"That's all your prayer?" asked Attwater, with a singular ring in his voice.

"Guess so," said Davis.

"So?" said Attwater, resting the butt of his rifle on the ground, "is that done? Is your peace made with Heaven? Because it is with me. Go, and sin no more, sinful father. And remember that whatever you do to others, God shall visit it again a thousandfold upon your innocents."

The wretched Davis came staggering forward from his place against the figure-head, fell upon his knees, and waved his hands and fainted.

When he came to himself again, his head was on Attwater's arm, and close by stood one of the men in diver's helmet, holding a bucket of



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water, from which his late executioner now laved his face. The memory of that dreadful passage returned upon him in a clap; again he saw Huish lying dead, again he seemed to himself to totter on the brink of an unplumbed eternity. With trembling hands he seized hold of the man whom he had come to slay; and his voice broke from him like that of a child among the nightmares of fever: "Oh! isn't there no mercy? Oh! what must I do to be saved?"

"Ah!" thought Attwater, "here is the true penitent."



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## CHAPTER XII

### A TAIL-PIECE

ON a very bright, hot, lusty, strongly blowing noon, a fortnight after the events recorded, and a month since the curtain rose upon this episode, a man might have been spied praying on the sand by the lagoon beach. A point of palm-trees isolated him from the settlement; and from the place where he knelt, the only work of man's hand that interrupted the expanse was the schooner *Farallone*, her berth quite changed, and rocking at anchor some two miles to windward in the midst of the lagoon. The noise of the Trade ran very boisterous in all parts of the island; the nearer palm-trees crashed and whistled in the gusts, those farther off contributed a humming bass, like the roar of cities; and yet, to any man less absorbed, there must have risen at times over this turmoil of the winds the sharper note of the human voice from the settlement. There all was activity. Attwater, stripped to his trousers and lending a strong hand of help, was directing and encouraging five Kanakas; from his lively voice, and their more lively



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efforts, it was to be gathered that some sudden and joyful emergency had set them in this bustle; and the Union Jack floated once more on its staff. But the suppliant on the beach, unconscious of their voices, prayed on with instancy and fervour, and the sound of his voice rose and fell again, and his countenance brightened and was deformed with changing moods of piety and terror.

Before his closed eyes the skiff had been for some time tacking towards the distant and deserted *Farallone;* and presently the figure of Herrick might have been observed to board her, to pass for a while into the house, thence forward to the forecastle, and at last to plunge into the main hatch. In all these quarters, his visit was followed by a coil of smoke; and he had scarce entered his boat again and shoved off, before flames broke forth upon the schooner. They burned gayly; kerosene had not been spared, and the bellows of the Trade incited the conflagration. About halfway on the return voyage, when Herrick looked back, he beheld the *Farallone* wrapped to the topmasts in leaping arms of fire, and the voluminous smoke pursuing him along the face of the lagoon. In one hour's time, he computed, the waters would have closed over the stolen ship. It so chanced that, as his boat flew before the wind with much vivacity, and his eyes were continually busy in the wake, measuring the progress of the flames, he



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found himself embayed to the northward of the point of palms, and here became aware at the same time of the figure of Davis immersed in his devotion. An exclamation, part of annoyance, part of amusement, broke from him, and he touched the helm and ran the prow upon the beach not twenty feet from the unconscious devotee. Taking the painter in his hand, he landed, drew near, and stood over him. And still the voluble and incoherent stream of prayer continued unabated. It was not possible for him to overhear the suppliant's petitions, which he listened to some while in a very mingled mood of humour and pity, and it was only when his own name began to occur and to be conjoined with epithets, that he at last laid his hand on the captain's shoulder.

"Sorry to interrupt the exercise," said he, "but I want you to look at the *Farallone*."

The captain scrambled to his feet, and stood gasping and staring. "Mr. Herrick, don't startle a man like that!" he said. "I don't seem someways rightly myself since——" he broke off. "What did you say, anyway? Oh, the *Farallone*," and he looked languidly out.

"Yes," said Herrick, "there she burns; and you may guess from that what the news is."

"The *Trinity Hall*, I guess," said the captain.

"The same," said Herrick, "sighted half an hour ago, and coming up hand over fist."



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"Well, it don't amount to a hill of beans," said the captain, with a sigh.

"Oh, come, that's rank ingratitude!" cried Herrick.

"Well," replied the captain, meditatively, "you mayn't just see the way that I view it in, but I'd 'most rather stay here upon this island. I found peace here, peace in believing. Yes, I guess this island is about good enough for John Davis."

"I never heard such nonsense!" cried Herrick. "What! with all turning out in your favour the way it does,—the *Farallone* wiped out, the crew disposed of, a sure thing for your wife and family, and you yourself Attwater's spoiled darling and pet penitent!"

"Now, Mr. Herrick, don't say that," said the captain, gently, "when you know he don't make no difference between us. But, oh, why not be one of us? Why not come to Jesus right away, and let's meet in yon beautiful land? That's just the one thing wanted; just say 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!' and He'll fold you in His arms. You see, I know; I been a sinner myself."



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# WEIR OF HERMISTON

## A FRAGMENT

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*TO*

# *MY WIFE*

*I saw rain falling and the rainbow drawn*
*On Lammermuir. Hearkening I heard again*
*In my precipitous city beaten bells*
*Winnow the keen sea wind. And here afar,*
*Intent on my own race and place, I wrote.*
*Take thou the writing: thine it is. For who*
*Burnished the sword, blew on the drowsy coal,*
*Held still the target higher, chary of praise*
*And prodigal of counsel—who but thou?*
*So now, in the end, if this the least be good,*
*If any deed be done, if any fire*
*Burn in the imperfect page, the praise be thine.*

*R. L. S.*

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# INTRODUCTORY

IN the wild end of a moorland parish, far out of the sight of any house, there stands a cairn among the heather, and a little by east of it, in the going down of the braeside, a monument with some verses half defaced. It was here that Claverhouse shot with his own hand the Praying Weaver of Balweary, and the chisel of Old Mortality has clinked on that lonely gravestone. Public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills; and since the Cameronian gave his life there, two hundred years ago, in a glorious folly, and without comprehension or regret, the silence of the moss has been broken once again by the report of firearms and the cry of the dying.

The Deil's Hags was the old name. But the place is now called Francie's Cairn. For a while it was told that Francie walked. Aggie Hogg met him in the gloaming by the cairnside, and he spoke to her, with chattering teeth, so that his words were lost. He pursued Rob Todd (if any one could have believed Robbie) for the space of half a mile with pitiful entreaties. But the



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age is one of incredulity; these superstitious decorations speedily fell off; and the facts of the story itself, like the bones of a giant buried there and half dug up, survived, naked and imperfect, in the memory of the scattered neighbours. To this day, of winter nights, when the sleet is on the window and the cattle are quiet in the byre, there will be told again, amid the silence of the young and the additions and corrections of the old, the tale of the Justice-Clerk and of his son young Hermiston, that vanished from men's knowledge; of the Two Kirsties and the Four Black Brothers of the Cauldstaneslap; and of Frank Innes, "the young fool advocate," that came into these moorland parts to find his destiny.



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# CHAPTER I

## LIFE AND DEATH OF MRS. WEIR

THE Lord Justice-Clerk was a stranger in that part of the country; but his lady wife was known there from a child, as her race had been before her. The old "riding Rutherfords of Hermiston," of whom she was the last descendant, had been famous men of yore, ill neighbours, ill subjects, and ill husbands to their wives though not their properties. Tales of them were rife for twenty miles about; and their name was even printed in the page of our Scots histories, not always to their credit. One bit the dust at Flodden; one was hanged at his peel door by James the Fifth; another fell dead in a carouse with Tom Dalzell; while a fourth (and that was Jean's own father) died presiding at a Hell-Fire Club, of which he was the founder. There were many heads shaken in Crossmichael at that judgment; the more so as the man had a villainous reputation among high and low, and both with the godly and the worldly. At that very hour of his



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demise, he had ten going pleas before the session, eight of them oppressive. And the same doom extended even to his agents; his grieve, that had been his right hand in many a left-hand business, being cast from his horse one night and drowned in a peat-hag on the Kye-skairs; and his very doer (although lawyers have long spoons) surviving him not long, and dying on a sudden in a bloody flux.

In all these generations, while a male Rutherford was in the saddle with his lads, or brawling in a change-house, there would be always a white-faced wife immured at home in the old peel or the later mansion-house. It seemed this succession of martyrs bided long, but took their vengeance in the end, and that was in the person of the last descendant, Jean. She bore the name of the Rutherfords, but she was the daughter of their trembling wives. At the first she was not wholly without charm. Neighbours recalled in her, as a child, a strain of elfin wilfulness, gentle little mutinies, sad little gaieties, even a morning gleam of beauty that was not to be fulfilled. She withered in the growing, and (whether it was the sins of her sires or the sorrows of her mothers) came to her maturity depressed, and, as it were, defaced; no blood of life in her, no grasp or gaiety; pious, anxious, tender, tearful, and incompetent.

It was a wonder to many that she had married —seeming so wholly of the stuff that makes old



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maids. But chance cast her in the path of Adam Weir, then the new Lord Advocate, a recognised, risen man, the conqueror of many obstacles, and thus late in the day beginning to think upon a wife. He was one who looked rather to obedience than beauty, yet it would seem he was struck with her at the first look. "Wha's she?" he said, turning to his host; and, when he had been told, "Ay," says he, "she looks menseful. She minds me——"; and then, after a pause (which some have been daring enough to set down to sentimental recollections), "Is she releegious?" he asked, and was shortly after, at his own request, presented. The acquaintance, which it seems profane to call a courtship, was pursued with Mr. Weir's accustomed industry, and was long a legend, or rather a source of legends, in the Parliament House. He was described coming, rosy with much port, into the drawing-room, walking direct up to the lady, and assailing her with pleasantries, to which the embarrassed fair one responded, in what seemed a kind of agony, "Eh, Mr. Weir!" or "O, Mr. Weir!" or "Keep me, Mr. Weir!" On the very eve of their engagement it was related that one had drawn near to the tender couple, and had overheard the lady cry out, with the tones of one who talked for the sake of talking, "Keep me, Mr. Weir, and what became of him?" and the profound accents of the suitor's reply, "Haangit, mem, haangit." The motives upon either side



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were much debated. Mr. Weir must have supposed his bride to be somehow suitable; perhaps he belonged to that class of men who think a weak head the ornament of women—an opinion invariably punished in this life. Her descent and her estate were beyond question. Her wayfaring ancestors and her litigious father had done well by Jean. There was ready money and there were broad acres, ready to fall wholly to the husband, to lend dignity to his descendants, and to himself a title, when he should be called upon the Bench. On the side of Jean there was perhaps some fascination of curiosity as to this unknown male animal that approached her with the roughness of a ploughman and the *aplomb* of an advocate. Being so trenchantly opposed to all she knew, loved, or understood, he may well have seemed to her the extreme, if scarcely the ideal, of his sex. And besides, he was an ill man to refuse. A little over forty at the period of his marriage, he looked already older, and to the force of manhood added the senatorial dignity of years; it was, perhaps, with an unreverend awe, but he was awful. The Bench, the Bar, and the most experienced and reluctant witness, bowed to his authority—and why not Jeannie Rutherford?

The heresy about foolish women is always punished, I have said, and Lord Hermiston began to pay the penalty at once. His house in George Square was wretchedly ill-guided; noth-



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ing answerable to the expense of maintenance but the cellar, which was his own private care. When things went wrong at dinner, as they continually did, my lord would look up the table at his wife: "I think these broth would be better to swim in than to sup." Or else to the butler: "Here, M'Killop, awa' wi' this Raadical gigot—tak' it to the French, man, and bring me some puddocks! It seems rather a sore kind of business that I should be all day in Court haanging Raadicals, and get nawthing to my denner." Of course this was but a manner of speaking, and he had never hanged a man for being a Radical in his life; the law, of which he was the faithful minister, directing otherwise. And of course these growls were in the nature of pleasantry, but it was of a recondite sort; and uttered as they were in his resounding voice, and commented on by that expression which they called in the Parliament House "Hermiston's hanging face"—they struck mere dismay into the wife. She sat before him speechless and fluttering; at each dish, as at a fresh ordeal, her eye hovered toward my lord's countenance and fell again; if he but ate in silence, unspeakable relief was her portion; if there were complaint, the world was darkened. She would seek out the cook, who was always her *sister in the Lord.* "O my dear, this is the most dreidful thing that my lord can never be contented in his own house!" she would begin; and weep and pray with the cook; and then the cook

would pray with Mrs. Weir; and the next day's meal would never be a penny the better—and the next cook (when she came) would be worse, if anything, but just as pious. It was often wondered that Lord Hermiston bore it as he did; indeed he was a stoical old voluptuary, contented with sound wine and plenty of it. But there were moments when he overflowed. Perhaps half a dozen times in the history of his married life—"Here! tak' it awa', and bring me a piece of bread and kebbuck!" he had exclaimed, with an appalling explosion of his voice and rare gestures. None thought to dispute or to make excuses; the service was arrested; Mrs. Weir sat at the head of the table whimpering without disguise; and his lordship opposite munched his bread and cheese in ostentatious disregard. Once only Mrs. Weir had ventured to appeal. He was passing her chair on his way into the study.

"O, Edom!" she wailed, in a voice tragic with tears, and reaching out to him both hands, in one of which she held a sopping pocket-handkerchief.

He paused and looked upon her with a face of wrath, into which there stole, as he looked, a twinkle of humour.

"Noansense!" he said. "You and your noansense! What do I want with a Christian faim'ly? I want Christian broth! Get me a lass that can plain-boil a potato, if she was a whüre off the streets." And with these words, which echoed



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in her tender ears like blasphemy, he had passed on to his study and shut the door behind him.

Such was the housewifery in George Square. It was better at Hermiston, where Kirstie Elliot, the sister of a neighbouring bonnet-laird, and an eighteenth cousin of the lady's, bore the charge of all, and kept a trim house and a good country table. Kirstie was a woman in a thousand, clean, capable, notable; once a moorland Helen, and still comely as a blood horse and healthy as the hill wind. High in flesh and voice and colour, she ran the house with her whole intemperate soul, in a bustle, not without buffets. Scarce more pious than decency in those days required, she was the cause of many an anxious thought and many a tearful prayer to Mrs. Weir. Housekeeper and mistress renewed the parts of Martha and Mary; and though with a pricking conscience Mary reposed on Martha's strength as on a rock. Even Lord Hermiston held Kirstie in a particular regard. There were few with whom he unbent so gladly, few whom he favoured with so many pleasantries. "Kirstie and me maun have our joke," he would declare, in high good-humour, as he buttered Kirstie's scones and she waited at table. A man who had no need either of love or of popularity, a keen reader of men and of events, there was perhaps only one truth for which he was quite unprepared: he would have been quite unprepared to learn that Kirstie hated him. He thought maid and master were



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well matched; hard, handy, healthy, broad Scots folk, without a hair of nonsense to the pair of them. And the fact was that she made a goddess and an only child of the effete and tearful lady; and even as she waited at table her hands would sometimes itch for my lord's ears.

Thus, at least, when the family were at Hermiston, not only my lord, but Mrs. Weir too, enjoyed a holiday. Free from the dreadful looking-for of the miscarried dinner, she would mind her seam, read her piety books, and take her walk (which was my lord's orders), sometimes by herself, sometimes with Archie, the only child of that scarce natural union. The child was her next bond to life. Her frosted sentiment bloomed again, she breathed deep of life, she let loose her heart, in that society. The miracle of her motherhood was ever new to her. The sight of the little man at her skirt intoxicated her with the sense of power, and froze her with the consciousness of her responsibility. She looked forward, and, seeing him in fancy grow up and play his diverse part on the world's theatre, caught in her breath and lifted up her courage with a lively effort. It was only with the child that she forgot herself and was at moments natural; yet it was only with the child that she had conceived and managed to pursue a scheme of conduct. Archie was to be a great man and a good; a minister if possible, a saint for certain. She tried to engage his mind upon her favourite



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books, Rutherford's "*Letters*," Scougal's "*Grace Abounding*," and the like. It was a common practice of hers (and strange to remember now) that she would carry the child to the Deil's Hags, sit with him on the Praying Weaver's stone and talk of the Covenanters till their tears ran down. Her view of history was wholly artless, a design in snow and ink; upon the one side, tender innocents with psalms upon their lips; upon the other the persecutors, booted, bloody-minded, flushed with wine; a suffering Christ, a raging Beelzebub. *Persecutor* was a word that knocked upon the woman's heart; it was her highest thought of wickedness, and the mark of it was on her house. Her great-great-grandfather had drawn the sword against the Lord's anointed on the field of Rullion Green, and breathed his last (tradition said) in the arms of the detestable Dalyell. Nor could she blind herself to this, that had they lived in these old days, Hermiston himself would have been numbered alongside of Bloody Mackenzie and the politic Lauderdale and Rothes, in the band of God's immediate enemies. The sense of this moved her to the more fervour; she had a voice for that name of *persecutor* that thrilled in the child's marrow; and when one day the mob hooted and hissed them all in my lord's travelling carriage, and cried, "Down with the persecutor! down with Hanging Hermiston!" and mamma covered her eyes and wept, and papa let down the glass and looked out upon the



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rabble with his droll formidable face, bitter and smiling, as they said he sometimes looked when he gave sentence, Archie was for the moment too much amazed to be alarmed, but he had scarce got his mother by herself before his shrill voice was raised demanding an explanation: Why had they called papa a persecutor?

"Keep me, my precious!" she exclaimed. "Keep me, my dear! this is poleetical. Ye must never ask me anything poleetical, Erchie. Your faither is a great man, my dear, and it's no for me or you to be judging him. It would be telling us all, if we behaved ourselves in our several stations the way your faither does in his high office; and let me hear no more of any such disrespectful and undutiful questions! No that you meant to be undutiful, my lamb; your mother kens that—she kens it well, dearie!" and so slid off to safer topics, and left on the mind of the child an obscure but ineradicable sense of something wrong.

Mrs. Weir's philosophy of life was summed in one expression—tenderness. In her view of the universe, which was all lighted up with a glow out of the doors of hell, good people must walk there in a kind of ecstasy of tenderness. The beasts and plants had no soul; they were here but for a day, and let their day pass gently! And as for the immortal men, on what black, downward path were many of them wending, and to what a horror of an immortality! "Are not two



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sparrows," "Whosoever shall smite thee," "God sendeth His rain," "Judge not that ye be not judged"—these texts made her body of divinity; she put them on in the morning with her clothes and lay down to sleep with them at night; they haunted her like a favourite air, they clung about her like a favourite perfume. Their minister was a marrowy expounder of the law, and my lord sat under him with relish; but Mrs. Weir respected him from far off; heard him (like the cannon of a beleaguered city) usefully booming outside on the dogmatic ramparts; and meanwhile, within and out of shot, dwelt in her private garden, which she watered with grateful tears. It seems strange to say of this colourless and ineffectual woman, but she was a true enthusiast, and might have made the sunshine and the glory of a cloister. Perhaps none but Archie knew she could be eloquent; perhaps none but he had seen her—her colour raised, her hands clasped or quivering—glow with gentle ardour. There is a corner of the policy of Hermiston, where you come suddenly in view of the summit of Black Fell, sometimes like the mere grass top of a hill, sometimes (and this is her own expression) like a precious jewel in the heavens. On such days, upon the sudden view of it, her hand would tighten on the child's fingers, her voice rise like a song. "I to the hills!" she would repeat. "And O, Erchie, are na these like the hills of Naphtali?" and her easy tears would flow.



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Upon an impressionable child the effect of this continual and pretty accompaniment to life was deep. The woman's quietism and piety passed on to his different nature undiminished; but whereas in her it was a native sentiment, in him it was only an implanted dogma. Nature and the child's pugnacity at times revolted. A cad from the Potterrow once struck him in the mouth; he struck back, the pair fought it out in the back stable lane towards the Meadows, and Archie returned with a considerable decline in the number of his front teeth, and unregenerately boasting of the losses of the foe. It was a sore day for Mrs. Weir; she wept and prayed over the infant backslider until my lord was due from Court, and she must resume that air of tremulous composure with which she always greeted him. The judge was that day in an observant mood, and remarked upon the absent teeth.

"I am afraid Erchie will have been fechting with some of they blagyard lads," said Mrs. Weir.

My lord's voice rang out as it did seldom in the privacy of his own house. "I'll have nonn of that, sir!" he cried. "Do you hear me?—nonn of that! No son of mine shall be speldering in the glaur with any dirty raibble."

The anxious mother was grateful for so much support; she had even feared the contrary. And that night when she put the child to bed—"Now, my dear, ye see!" she said, "I told you what



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your faither would think of it, if he heard ye had fallen into this dreidful sin; and let you and me pray to God that ye may be keepit from the like temptation or stren'thened to resist it!"

The womanly falsity of this was thrown away. Ice and iron cannot be welded; and the points of view of the Justice-Clerk and Mrs. Weir were not less unassimilable. The character and position of his father had long been a stumbling-block to Archie, and with every year of his age the difficulty grew more instant. The man was mostly silent; when he spoke at all, it was to speak of the things of the world, always in a worldly spirit, often in language that the child had been schooled to think coarse, and sometimes with words that he knew to be sins in themselves. Tenderness was the first duty, and my lord was invariably harsh. God was love; the name of my lord (to all who knew him) was fear. In the world, as schematised for Archie by his mother, the place was marked for such a creature. There were some whom it was good to pity and well (though very likely useless) to pray for; they were named reprobates, goats, God's enemies, brands for the burning; and Archie tallied every mark of identification, and drew the inevitable private inference that the Lord Justice-Clerk was the chief of sinners.

The mother's honesty was scarce complete. There was one influence she feared for the child and still secretly combated; that was my lord's;



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and half unconsciously, half in a wilful blindness, she continued to undermine her husband with his son. As long as Archie remained silent, she did so ruthlessly, with a single eye to heaven and the child's salvation; but the day came when Archie spoke. It was 1801, and Archie was seven, and beyond his years for curiosity and logic, when he brought the case up openly. If judging were sinful and forbidden, how came papa to be a judge? to have that sin for a trade? to bear the name of it for a distinction?

"I can't see it," said the little Rabbi, and wagged his head.

Mrs. Weir abounded in commonplace replies.

"No, I canna see it," reiterated Archie. "And I'll tell you what, mamma, I don't think you and me's justifeed in staying with him."

The woman awoke to remorse; she saw herself disloyal to her man, her sovereign and bread-winner, in whom (with what she had of worldliness) she took a certain subdued pride. She expatiated in reply on my lord's honour and greatness; his useful services in this world of sorrow and wrong, and the place in which he stood, far above where babes and innocents could hope to see or criticise. But she had builded too well—Archie had his answers pat: Were not babes and innocents the type of the kingdom of heaven? Were not honour and greatness the badges of the world? And at any rate, how about the mob that had once seethed about the carriage?



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"It's all very fine," he concluded, "but in my opinion, papa has no right to be it. And it seems that's not the worst yet of it. It seems he's called 'the Hanging Judge'—it seems he's crooool. I'll tell you what it is, mamma, there's a tex' borne in upon me: It were better for that man if a mile-stone were bound upon his back and him flung into the deepestmost pairts of the sea."

"O my lamb, ye must never say the like of that!" she cried. "Ye're to honour faither and mother, dear, that your days may be long in the land. It's Atheists that cry out against him—French Atheists, Erchie! Ye would never surely even yourself down to be saying the same thing as French Atheists? It would break my heart to think that of you. And O, Erchie, here arena *you* setting up to *judge?* And have ye no' forgot God's plain command—the First with Promise, dear? Mind you upon the beam and the mote!"

Having thus carried the war into the enemy's camp, the terrified lady breathed again. And no doubt it is easy thus to circumvent a child with catchwords, but it may be questioned how far it is effectual. An instinct in his breast detects the quibble, and a voice condemns it. He will instantly submit, privately hold the same opinion. For even in this simple and antique relation of the mother and the child, hypocrisies are multiplied.

When the Court rose that year and the family



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returned to Hermiston, it was a common remark in all the country that the lady was sore failed. She seemed to lose and seize again her touch with life, now sitting inert in a sort of durable bewilderment, anon waking to feverish and weak activity. She dawdled about the lasses at their work, looking stupidly on; she fell to rummaging in old cabinets and presses, and desisted when half through; she would begin remarks with an air of animation and drop them without a struggle. Her common appearance was of one who has forgotten something and is trying to remember; and when she overhauled, one after another, the worthless and touching mementoes of her youth, she might have been seeking the clue to that lost thought. During this period she gave many gifts to the neighbours and house lassies, giving them with a manner of regret that embarrassed the recipients.

The last night of all she was busy on some female work, and toiled upon it with so manifest and painful a devotion that my lord (who was not often curious) inquired as to its nature.

She blushed to the eyes. "O, Edom, it's for you!" she said. "It's slippers. I—I hae never made ye any."

"Ye daft auld wife!" returned his lordship. "A bonny figure I would be, palmering about in bauchles!"

The next day, at the hour of her walk, Kirstie interfered. Kirstie took this decay of her mis-



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tress very hard; bore her a grudge, quarrelled with and railed upon her, the anxiety of a genuine love wearing the disguise of temper. This day of all days she insisted disrespectfully, with rustic fury, that Mrs. Weir should stay at home. But, "No, no," she said, "it's my lord's orders," and set forth as usual. Archie was visible in the acre bog, engaged upon some childish enterprise, the instrument of which was mire; and she stood and looked at him a while like one about to call; then thought otherwise, sighed, and shook her head, and proceeded on her rounds alone. The house lassies were at the burnside washing, and saw her pass with her loose, weary, dowdy gait.

"She's a terrible feckless wife, the mistress!" said the one.

"Tut," said the other, "the wumman's seeck."

"Weel, I canna see nae differ in her," returned the first. "A fushionless quean, a feckless carline."

The poor creature thus discussed rambled a while in the grounds without a purpose. Tides in her mind ebbed and flowed, and carried her to and fro like seaweed. She tried a path, paused, returned, and tried another; questing, forgetting her quest; the spirit of choice extinct in her bosom, or devoid of sequency. On a sudden, it appeared as though she had remembered, or had formed a resolution, wheeled about, returned with hurried steps, and appeared in the dining-



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room where Kirstie was at the cleaning, like one charged with an important errand.

"Kirstie!" she began, and paused; and then with conviction, "Mr. Weir isna speeritually minded, but he has been a good man to me."

It was perhaps the first time since her husband's elevation that she had forgotten the handle to his name, of which the tender, inconsistent woman was not a little proud. And when Kirstie looked up at the speaker's face, she was aware of a change.

"Godsake, what's the maitter wi' ye, mem?" cried the housekeeper, starting from the rug.

"I do not ken," answered her mistress, shaking her head. "But he is not speeritually minded, my dear."

"Here, sit down with ye! Godsake, what ails the wife?" cried Kirstie, and helped and forced her into my lord's own chair by the cheek of the hearth.

"Keep me, what's this?" she gasped. "Kirstie, what's this? I'm frich'ened."

They were her last words.

It was the lowering nightfall when my lord returned. He had the sunset in his back, all clouds and glory; and before him, by the wayside, spied Kirstie Elliott waiting. She was dissolved in tears, and addressed him in the high, false note of barbarous mourning, such as still lingers modified among Scots heather.

"The Lord peety ye, Hermiston! the Lord pre-



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pare ye!" she keened out. "Weary upon me, that I should have to tell it!"

He reined in his horse and looked upon her with the hanging face.

"Has the French landit?" cried he.

"Man, man," she said, "is that a' ye can think of? The Lord prepare ye, the Lord comfort and support ye!"

"Is onybody deid?" says his lordship. "It's no Erchie?"

"Bethankit, no!" exclaimed the woman, startled into a more natural tone. "Na, na, it's no sae bad as that. It's the mistress, my lord; she just fair flittit before my e'en. She just gi'ed a sab and was by wi' it. Eh, my bonny Miss Jeannie, that I mind sae weel!" And forth again upon that pouring tide of lamentation in which women of her class excel and over-abound.

Lord Hermiston sat in the saddle, beholding her. Then he seemed to recover command upon himself.

"Weel, it's something of the suddenest," said he. "But she was a dwaibly body from the first."

And he rode home at a precipitate amble with Kirstie at his horse's heels.

Dressed as she was for her last walk, they had laid the dead lady on her bed. She was never interesting in life; in death she was not impressive; and as her husband stood before her, with his hands crossed behind his powerful back, that



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which he looked upon was the very image of the insignificant.

"Her and me were never cut out for one another," he remarked at last. "It was a daft-like marriage." And then, with a most unusual gentleness of tone, "Puir bitch," said he, "puir bitch!" Then suddenly: "Where's Erchie?"

Kirstie had decoyed him to her room and given him "a jeely-piece."

"Ye have some kind of gumption, too," observed the Judge, and considered his housekeeper grimly. "When all's said," he added, "I micht have done waur—I micht have been marriet upon a skirling Jezebel like you!"

"There's naebody thinking of you, Hermiston!" cried the offended woman. "We think of her that's out of her sorrows. And could *she* have done waur? Tell me that, Hermiston—tell me that before her clay-cauld corp!"

"Weel, there's some of them gey an' ill to please," observed his lordship.



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## CHAPTER II

### FATHER AND SON

MY Lord Justice-Clerk was known to many; the man Adam Weir perhaps to none. He had nothing to explain or to conceal; he sufficed wholly and silently to himself; and that part of our nature which goes out (too often with false coin) to acquire glory or love, seemed in him to be omitted. He did not try to be loved, he did not care to be; it is probable the very thought of it was a stranger to his mind. He was an admired lawyer, a highly unpopular judge; and he looked down upon those who were his inferiors in either distinction, who were lawyers of less grasp or judges not so much detested. In all the rest of his days and doings, not one trace of vanity appeared; and he went on through life with a mechanical movement, as of the unconscious, that was almost august.

He saw little of his son. In the childish maladies with which the boy was troubled, he would make daily inquiries and daily pay him a visit, entering the sick-room with a facetious and appalling countenance, letting off a few per-



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functory jests, and going again swiftly, to the patient's relief. Once, a Court holiday falling opportunely, my lord had his carriage, and drove the child himself to Hermiston, the customary place of convalescence. It is conceivable he had been more than usually anxious, for that journey always remained in Archie's memory as a thing apart, his father having related to him from beginning to end, and with much detail, three authentic murder cases. Archie went the usual round of other Edinburgh boys, the high school and the college; and Hermiston looked on, or rather looked away, with scarce an affectation of interest in his progress. Daily, indeed, upon a signal after dinner, he was brought in, given nuts and a glass of port, regarded sardonically, sarcastically questioned. "Well, sir, and what have you donn with your book to-day?" my lord might begin, and set him posers in law Latin. To a child just stumbling into Corderius, Papinian and Paul proved quite invincible. But papa had memory of no other. He was not harsh to the little scholar, having a vast fund of patience learned upon the bench, and was at no pains whether to conceal or to express his disappointment. "Well, ye have a long jaunt before ye yet!" he might observe, yawning, and fall back on his own thoughts (as like as not) until the time came for separation, and my lord would take the decanter and the glass, and be off to the back chamber looking on the Meadows,



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where he toiled on his cases till the hours were small. There was no "fuller man" on the Bench; his memory was marvellous, though wholly legal; if he had to "advise" extempore, none did it better; yet there was none who more earnestly prepared. As he thus watched in the night, or sat at table and forgot the presence of his son, no doubt but he tasted deeply of recondite pleasures. To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have succeeded in life; and perhaps only in law and the higher mathematics may this devotion be maintained, suffice to itself without reaction, and find continual rewards without excitement. This atmosphere of his father's sterling industry was the best of Archie's education. Assuredly it did not attract him; assuredly, it rather rebutted and depressed. Yet it was still present, unobserved like the ticking of a clock, an arid ideal, a tasteless stimulant in the boy's life.

But Hermiston was not all of one piece. He was, besides, a mighty toper; he could sit at wine until the day dawned, and pass directly from the table to the Bench with a steady hand and a clear head. Beyond the third bottle, he showed the plebeian in a larger print; the low, gross accent, the low, foul mirth, grew broader and commoner; he became less formidable, and infinitely more disgusting. Now, the boy had inherited from Jean Rutherford a shivering delicacy, unequally mated with potential violence. In the



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playing-fields, and amongst his own companions, he repaid a coarse expression with a blow; at his father's table (when the time came for him to join these revels) he turned pale and sickened in silence. Of all the guests whom he there encountered, he had toleration for only one: David Keith Carnegie, Lord Glenalmond. Lord Glenalmond was tall and emaciated, with long features and long delicate hands. He was often compared with the statue of Forbes of Culloden in the Parliament House; and his blue eye, at more than sixty, preserved some of the fire of youth. His exquisite disparity with any of his fellow-guests, his appearance as of an artist and an artistocrat stranded in rude company, riveted the boy's attention; and as curiosity and interest are the things in the world that are the most immediately and certainly rewarded, Lord Glenalmond was attracted to the boy.

"And so this is your son, Hermiston?" he asked, laying his hand on Archie's shoulder. "He's getting a big lad."

"Hout!" said the gracious father, "just his mother over again—daurna say boo to a goose!"

But the stranger retained the boy, talked to him, drew him out, found in him a taste for letters, and a fine, ardent, modest, youthful soul; and encouraged him to be a visitor on Sunday evenings in his bare, cold, lonely dining-room, where he sat and read in the isolation of a bachelor grown old in refinement. The beautiful



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gentleness and grace of the old Judge, and the delicacy of his person, thoughts, and language, spoke to Archie's heart in its own tongue. He conceived the ambition to be such another; and, when the day came for him to choose a profession, it was in emulation of Lord Glenalmond, not of Lord Hermiston, that he chose the Bar. Hermiston looked on at this friendship with some secret pride, but openly with the intolerance of scorn. He scarce lost an opportunity to put them down with a rough jape; and, to say truth, it was not difficult, for they were neither of them quick. He had a word of contempt for the whole crowd of poets, painters, fiddlers, and their admirers, the bastard race of amateurs, which was continually on his lips. "Signor Feedle-eerie!" he would say. "Oh, for Goad's sake, no more of the Signor!"

"You and my father are great friends, are you not?" asked Archie once.

"There is no man that I more respect, Archie," replied Lord Glenalmond. "He is two things of price. He is a great lawyer, and he is upright as the day."

"You and he are so different," said the boy, his eyes dwelling on those of his old friend, like a lover's on his mistress's.

"Indeed so," replied the Judge; "very different. And so I fear are you and he. Yet I would like it very ill if my young friend were to misjudge his father. He has all the Roman vir-



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tues: Cato and Brutus were such; I think a son's heart might well be proud of such an ancestry of one."

"And I would sooner he were a plaided herd," cried Archie, with sudden bitterness.

"And that is neither very wise, nor I believe entirely true," returned Glenalmond. "Before you are done you will find some of these expressions rise on you like a remorse. They are merely literary and decorative; they do not aptly express your thought, nor is your thought clearly apprehended, and no doubt your father (if he were here) would say 'Signor Feedle-eerie!'"

With the infinitely delicate sense of youth, Archie avoided the subject from that hour. It was perhaps a pity. Had he but talked—talked freely—let himself gush out in words (the way youth loves to do and should), there might have been no tale to write upon the Weirs of Hermiston. But the shadow of a threat of ridicule sufficed; in the slight tartness of these words he read a prohibition; and it is likely that Glenalmond meant it so.

Besides the veteran, the boy was without confidant or friend. Serious and eager, he came through school and college, and moved among a crowd of the indifferent, in the seclusion of his shyness. He grew up handsome, with an open, speaking countenance, with graceful, youthful, ways; he was clever, he took prizes, he shone in



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the Speculative Society.[1] It should seem he must become the centre of a crowd of friends; but something that was in part the delicacy of his mother, in part the austerity of his father, held him aloof from all. It is a fact, and a strange one, that among his contemporaries Hermiston's son was thought to be a chip of the old block. "You're a friend of Archie Weir's?" said one to Frank Innes; and Innes replied, with his usual flippancy and more than his usual insight: "I know Weir, but I never met Archie." No one had met Archie, a malady most incident to only sons. He flew his private signal, and none heeded it; it seemed he was abroad in a world from which the very hope of intimacy was banished; and he looked round about him on the concourse of his fellow-students, and forward to the trivial days and acquaintances that were to come, without hope or interest.

As time went on, the tough and rough old sinner felt himself drawn to the son of his loins and sole continuator of his new family, with softnesses of sentiment that he could hardly credit and was wholly impotent to express. With a face, voice, and manner trained through forty years to terrify and repel, Rhadamanthus may be great, but he will scarce be engaging. It is a fact that he tried to propitiate Archie, but a fact that cannot be too lightly taken; the attempt

[1] A famous debating society of the students of Edinburgh University.



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was so unconspicuously made, the failure so stoically supported. Sympathy is not due to these steadfast iron natures. If he failed to gain his son's friendship, or even his son's toleration, on he went up the great, bare staircase of his duty, uncheered and undepressed. There might have been more pleasure in his relations with Archie, so much he may have recognised at moments; but pleasure was a by-product of the singular chemistry of life, which only fools expected.

An idea of Archie's attitude, since we are all grown up and have forgotten the days of our youth, it is more difficult to convey. He made no attempt whatsoever to understand the man with whom he dined and breakfasted. Parsimony of pain, glut of pleasure, these are the two alternating ends of youth; and Archie was of the parsimonious. The wind blew cold out of a certain quarter—he turned his back upon it; stayed as little as was possible in his father's presence; and when there, averted his eyes as much as was decent from his father's face. The lamp shone for many hundred days upon these two at table—my lord ruddy, gloomy, and unreverent; Archie with a potential brightness that was always dimmed and veiled in that society; and there were not, perhaps, in Christendom two men more radically strangers. The father, with a grand simplicity, either spoke of what interested himself, or maintained an unaffected



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silence. The son turned in his head for some topic that should be quite safe, that would spare him fresh evidences either of my lord's inherent grossness or of the innocence of his inhumanity; treading gingerly the ways of intercourse, like a lady gathering up her skirts in a by-path. If he made a mistake, and my lord began to abound in matter of offence, Archie drew himself up, his brow grew dark, his share of the talk expired; but my lord would faithfully and cheerfully continue to pour out the worst of himself before his silent and offended son.

"Well, it's a poor hert that never rejoices," he would say, at the conclusion of such a nightmare interview. "But I must get to my plew-stilts." And he would seclude himself as usual in the back room, and Archie go forth into the night and the city, quivering with animosity and scorn.



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## CHAPTER III

### IN THE MATTER OF THE HANGING OF DUNCAN JOPP

IT chanced in the year 1813 that Archie strayed one day into the Judiciary Court. The macer made room for the son of the presiding judge. In the dock, the centre of men's eyes, there stood a whey-coloured, misbegotten caitiff, Duncan Jopp, on trial for his life. His story, as it was raked out before him in that public scene, was one of disgrace and vice and cowardice, the very nakedness of crime; and the creature heard and it seemed at times as though he understood —as if at times he forgot the horror of the place he stood in, and remembered the shame of what had brought him there. He kept his head bowed and his hands clutched upon the rail; his hair dropped in his eyes and at times he flung it back; and now he glanced about the audience in a sudden fellness of terror, and now looked in the face of his judge and gulped. There was pinned about his throat a piece of dingy flannel; and this it was perhaps that turned the scale in Archie's mind between disgust and pity. The creature



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stood in a vanishing point; yet a little while, and he was still a man, and had eyes and apprehension; yet a little longer, and with a last sordid piece of pageantry, he would cease to be. And here, in the meantime, with a trait of human nature that caught at the beholder's breath, he was tending a sore throat.

Over against him, my Lord Hermiston occupied the bench in the red robes of criminal jurisdiction, his face framed in the white wig. Honest all through, he did not affect the virtue of impartiality; this was no case for refinement; there was a man to be hanged, he would have said, and he was hanging him. Nor was it possible to see his lordship, and acquit him of gusto in the task. It was plain he gloried in the exercise of his trained faculties, in the clear sight which pierced at once into the joint of fact, in the rude, unvarnished jibes with which he demolished every figment of defence. He took his ease and jested, unbending in that solemn place with some of the freedom of the tavern, and the rag of man with the flannel round his neck was hunted gallowsward with jeers.

Duncan had a mistress, scarce less forlorn and greatly older than himself, who came up, whimpering and curtseying, to add the weight of her betrayal. My lord gave her the oath in his most roaring voice and added an intolerant warning.

"Mind what ye say now, Janet," said he. "I have an e'e upon ye; I'm ill to jest with."



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Presently, after she was tremblingly embarked on her story, "And what made ye do this, ye auld runt?" the Court interposed. "Do ye mean to tell me ye was the panel's mistress?"

"If you please, ma loard," whined the female.

"Godsake! ye made a bonny couple," observed his lordship; and there was something so formidable and ferocious in his scorn that not even the galleries thought to laugh.

The summing up contained some jewels.

"These two peetiable creatures seem to have made up thegither, it's not for us to explain why."—"The panel, who (whatever else he may be) appears to be equally ill set-out in mind and boady."—"Neither the panel nor yet the old wife appears to have had so much common sense as even to tell a lie when it was necessary." And in the course of sentencing, my lord had this *obiter dictum:* "I have been the means, under God, of haanging a great number, but never just such a disjaskit rascal as yourself." The words were strong in themselves: the light and heat and detonation of their delivery, and the savage pleasure of the speaker in his task, made them tingle in the ears.

When all was over, Archie came forth again into a changed world. Had there been the least redeeming greatness in the crime, any obscurity, any dubiety, perhaps he might have understood. But the culprit stood, with his sore throat, in the sweat of his mortal agony, without defence



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of excuse, a thing to cover up with blushes, a being so much sunk beneath the zones of sympathy that pity might seem harmless. And the judge had pursued him with a monstrous, relishing gaiety, horrible to be conceived, a trait for nightmares. It is one thing to spear a tiger, another to crush a toad; there are æsthetics even of the slaughter-house; and the loathsomeness of Duncan Jopp enveloped and infected the image of his judge.

Archie passed by his friends in the High Street with incoherent words and gestures. He saw Holyrood in a dream, remembrance of its romance awoke in him and faded; he had a vision of the old radiant stories, of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie, of the hooded stag, of the splendour and crime, the velvet and bright iron of the past; and dismissed them with a cry of pain. He lay and moaned in the Hunter's Bog, and the heavens were dark above him and the grass of the field an offence. "This is my father," he said. "I draw my life from him; the flesh upon my bones is his, the bread I am fed with is the wages of these horrors." He recalled his mother, and ground his forehead in the earth. He thought of flight, and where was he to flee to? of other lives, but was there any life worth living in this den of savage and jeering animals?

The interval before the execution was like a violent dream. He met his father; he would not look at him, he could not speak to him. It

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seemed there was no living creature but must have been swift to recognise that imminent animosity, but the hide of the Lord Justice-Clerk remained impenetrable. Had my lord been talkative, the truce could never have subsisted; but he was by fortune in one of his humours of sour silence; and under the very guns of his broadside Archie nursed the enthusiasm of rebellion. It seemed to him, from the top of his nineteen years' experience, as if he were marked at birth to be the perpetrator of some signal action, to set back fallen Mercy, to overthrow the usurping devil that sat, horned and hoofed, on her throne. Seductive Jacobin figments, which he had often refuted at the Speculative, swam up in his mind and startled him as with voices; and he seemed to himself to walk accompanied by an almost tangible presence of new beliefs and duties.

On the named morning he was at the place of execution. He saw the fleering rabble, the flinching wretch produced. He looked on for a while at a certain parody of devotion, which seemed to strip the wretch of his last claim to manhood. Then followed the brutal instant of extinction, and the paltry dangling of the remains like a broken jumping-jack. He had been prepared for something terrible, not for this tragic meanness. He stood a moment silent, and then—"I denounce this God-defying murder," he shouted; and his father, if he must have



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disclaimed the sentiment, might have owned the stentorian voice with which it was uttered.

Frank Innes dragged him from the spot. The two handsome lads followed the same course of study and recreation, and felt a certain mutual attraction, founded mainly on good looks. It had never gone deep; Frank was by nature a thin, jeering creature, not truly susceptible whether of feeling or inspiring friendship; and the relation between the pair was altogether on the outside, a thing of common knowledge and the pleasantries that spring from a common acquaintance. The more credit to Frank that he was appalled by Archie's outburst, and at least conceived the design of keeping him in sight, and, if possible, in hand, for the day. But Archie, who had just defied—was it God or Satan?—would not listen to the word of a college companion.

"I will not go with you," he said. "I do not desire your company, sir; I would be alone."

"Here, Weir, man, don't be absurd," said Innes, keeping a tight hold upon his sleeve. "I will not let you go until I know what you mean to do with yourself; it's no use brandishing that staff." For indeed at that moment Archie had made a sudden—perhaps a warlike—movement. "This has been the most insane affair; you know it has. You know very well that I'm playing the good Samaritan. All I wish is to keep you quiet."



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"If quietness is what you wish, Mr. Innes," said Archie, "and you will promise to leave me entirely to myself, I will tell you so much, that I am going to walk in the country and admire the beauties of nature."

"Honour bright?" asked Frank.

"I am not in the habit of lying, Mr. Innes," retorted Archie. "I have the honour of wishing you good-day."

"You won't forget the Spec.?" asked Innes.

"The Spec.?" said Archie. "Oh no, I won't forget the Spec."

And the one young man carried his tortured spirit forth of the city and all the day long, by one road and another, in an endless pilgrimage of misery; while the other hastened smilingly to spread the news of Weir's access of insanity, and to drum up for that night a full attendance at the Speculative, where further eccentric developments might certainly be looked for. I doubt if Innes had the least belief in his prediction: I think it flowed rather from a wish to make the story as good and the scandal as great as possible; not from any ill-will to Archie—from the mere pleasure of beholding interested faces. But for all that his words were prophetic. Archie did not forget the Spec.; he put in an appearance there at the due time, and, before the evening was over, had dealt a memorable shock to his companions. It chanced he was the president of the night. He sat in the same room where



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the Society still meets—only the portraits were not there; the men who afterwards sat for them were then but beginning their career. The same lustre of many tapers shed its light over the meeting; the same chair, perhaps, supported him that so many of us have sat in since. At times he seemed to forget the business of the evening, but even in these periods he sat with a great air of energy and determination. At times he meddled bitterly and launched with defiance those fines which are the precious and rarely used artillery of the president. He little thought, as he did so, how he resembled his father, but his friends remarked upon it, chuckling. So far, in his high place above his fellow-students, he seemed set beyond the possibility of any scandal; but his mind was made up—he was determined to fulfil the sphere of his offence. He signed to Innes (whom he had just fined, and who just impeached his ruling) to succeed him in the chair, stepped down from the platform, and took his place by the chimney-piece, the shine of many wax tapers from above illuminating his pale face, the glow of the great red fire relieving from behind his slim figure. He had to propose, as an amendment to the next subject in the case-book, "Whether capital punishment be consistent with God's will or man's policy?"

A breath of embarrassment, of something like alarm, passed round the room, so daring did these words appear upon the lips of Hermiston's only



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son. But the amendment was not seconded; the previous question was promptly moved and unanimously voted, and the momentary scandal smuggled by. Innes triumphed in the fulfilment of his prophecy. He and Archie were now become the heroes of the night; but whereas every one crowded about Innes, when the meeting broke up, but one of all his companions came to speak to Archie.

"Weir, man! that was an extraordinary raid of yours!" observed this courageous member, taking him confidentially by the arm as they went out.

"I don't think it a raid," said Archie grimly. "More like a war. I saw that poor brute hanged this morning, and my gorge rises at it yet."

"Hut-tut!" returned his companion, and, dropping his arm like something hot, he sought the less tense society of others.

Archie found himself alone. The last of the faithful—or was it only the boldest of the curious?—had fled. He watched the black huddle of his fellow-students draw off down and up the street, in whispering or boisterous gangs. And the isolation of the moment weighed upon him like an omen and an emblem of his destiny in life. Bred up in unbroken fear himself, among trembling servants, and in a house which (at the least ruffle in the master's voice) shuddered into silence, he saw himself on the brink of the red valley of war, and measured the danger and



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length of it with awe. He made a détour in the glimmer and shadow of the streets, came into the back stable lane, and watched for a long while the light burn steady in the Judge's room. The longer he gazed upon that illuminated window-blind, the more blank became the picture of the man who sat behind it, endlessly turning over sheets of process, pausing to sip a glass of port, or rising and passing heavily about his book-lined walls to verify some reference. He could not combine the brutal judge and the industrious, dispassionate student; the connecting link escaped him; from such a dual nature, it was impossible he should predict behaviour; and he asked himself if he had done well to plunge into a business of which the end could not be foreseen; and presently after, with a sickening decline of confidence, if he had done loyally to strike his father. For he had struck him—defied him twice over and before a cloud of witnesses —struck him a public buffet before crowds. Who had called him to judge his father in these precarious and high questions? The office was usurped. It might have become a stranger; in a son—there was no blinking it—in a son, it was disloyal. And now, between these two natures so antipathetic, so hateful to each other, there was depending an unpardonable affront: and the providence of God alone might foresee the manner in which it would be resented by Lord Hermiston.



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These misgivings tortured him all night and arose with him in the winter's morning; they followed him from class to class, they made him shrinkingly sensitive to every shade of manner in his companions, they sounded in his ears through the current voice of the professor; and he brought them home with him at night unabated and indeed increased. The cause of this increase lay in a chance encounter with the celebrated Dr. Gregory. Archie stood looking vaguely in the lighted window of a book shop, trying to nerve himself for the approaching ordeal. My lord and he had met and parted in the morning as they had now done for long, with scarcely the ordinary civilities of life; and it was plain to the son that nothing had yet reached the father's ears. Indeed, when he recalled the awful countenance of my lord, a timid hope sprang up in him that perhaps there would be found no one bold enough to carry tales. If this were so, he asked himself, would he begin again? and he found no answer. It was at this moment that a hand was laid upon his arm, and a voice said in his ear, "My dear Mr. Archie, you had better come and see me."

He started, turned around, and found himself face to face with Dr. Gregory. "And why should I come to see you?" he asked, with the defiance of the miserable.

"Because you are looking exceeding ill," said the doctor, "and you very evidently want look-



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ing after, my young friend. Good folk are scarce, you know; and it is not every one that would be quite so much missed as yourself. It is not every one that Hermiston would miss."

And with a nod and smile, the doctor passed on.

A moment after, Archie was in pursuit, and had in turn, but more roughly, seized him by the arm.

"What do you mean? what did you mean by saying that? What makes you think that Hermis—my father would have missed me?"

The doctor turned about and looked him all over with a clinical eye. A far more stupid man than Dr. Gregory might have guessed the truth; but ninety-nine out of a hundred, even if they had been equally inclined to kindness, would have blundered by some touch of charitable exaggeration. The doctor was better inspired. He knew the father well; in that white face of intelligence and suffering, he divined something of the son; and he told, without apology or adornment, the plain truth.

"When you had the measles, Mr. Archibald, you had them gey and ill; and I thought you were going to slip between my fingers," he said. "Well, your father was anxious. How did I know it? says you. Simply because I am a trained observer. The sign that I saw him make ten thousand would have missed; and perhaps—*perhaps*, I say, because he's a hard man to judge of—but perhaps he never made another. A



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strange thing to consider! It was this. One day I came to him: 'Hermiston,' said I, 'there's a change.' He never said a word, just glowered at me (if ye'll pardon the phrase) like a wild beast. 'A change for the better,' said I. And I distinctly heard him take his breath."

The doctor left no opportunity for anti-climax; nodding his cocked hat (a piece of antiquity to which he clung) and repeating "Distinctly" with raised eyebrows, he took his departure, and left Archie speechless in the street.

The anecdote might be called infinitely little, and yet its meaning for Archie was immense. "I did not know the old man had so much blood in him." He had never dreamed this sire of his, this aboriginal antique, this adamantine Adam, had even so much of a heart as to be moved in the least degree for another—and that other himself, who had insulted him! With the generosity of youth, Archie was instantly under arms upon the other side: had instantly created a new image of Lord Hermiston, that of a man who was all iron without and all sensibility within. The mind of the vile jester, the tongue that had pursued Duncan Jopp with unmanly insults, the unbeloved countenance that he had known and feared for so long, were all forgotten; and he hastened home, impatient to confess his misdeeds, impatient to throw himself on the mercy of this imaginary character.

He was not to be long without a rude awaken-



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ing. It was in the gloaming when he drew near the doorstep of the lighted house, and was aware of the figure of his father approaching from the opposite side. Little daylight lingered; but on the door being opened, the strong yellow shine of the lamp gushed out upon the landing and shone full on Archie, as he stood, in the old-fashioned observance of respect, to yield precedence. The Judge came without haste, stepping stately and firm; his chin raised, his face (as he entered the lamplight) strongly illumined, his mouth set hard. There was never a wink of change in his expression; without looking to the right or left, he mounted the stair, passed close to Archie, and entered the house. Instinctively, the boy, upon his first coming, had made a movement to meet him; instinctively, he recoiled against the railing, as the old man swept by him in a pomp of indignation. Words were needless; he knew all—perhaps more than all—and the hour of judgment was at hand.

It is possible that, in this sudden revulsion of hope and before these symptoms of impending danger, Archie might have fled. But not even that was left to him. My lord, after hanging up his cloak and hat, turned round in the lighted entry, and made him an imperative and silent gesture with his thumb, and with the strange instinct of obedience, Archie followed him into the house.

All dinner time there reigned over the Judge's



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table a palpable silence, and as soon as the solids were despatched he rose to his feet.

"M'Killop, tak' the wine into my room," said he; and then to his son: "Archie, you and me has to have a talk."

It was at this sickening moment that Archie's courage, for the first and last time, entirely deserted him. "I have an appointment," said he.

"It'll have to be broken, then," said Hermiston, and led the way into his study.

The lamp was shaded, the fire trimmed to a nicety, the table covered deep with orderly documents, the backs of law books made a frame upon all sides that was only broken by the window and the doors.

For a moment Hermiston warmed his hands at the fire, presenting his back to Archie; then suddenly disclosed on him the terrors of the Hanging Face.

"What's this I hear of ye!" he asked.

There was no answer possible to Archie.

"I'll have to tell ye, then," pursued Hermiston. "It seems ye've been skirling against the father that begot ye, and one of His Maijesty's Judges in this land; and that in the public street, and while an order of the Court was being executit. Forbye which, it would appear that ye've been airing your opeenions in a Coallege Debatin' Society," he paused a moment: and, then, with extraordinary bitterness, added: "Ye damned eediot."



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"I had meant to tell you," stammered Archie. "I see you are well informed."

"Muckle obleeged to ye," said his lordship, and took his usual seat. "And so you disapprove of Caapital Punishment?" he added.

"I am sorry, sir, I do," said Archie.

"I am sorry, too," said his lordship. "And now, if you please, we shall approach this business with a little more parteecularity. I hear that at the hanging of Duncan Jopp—and, man! ye had a fine client there—in the middle of all the riffraff of the ceety, ye thought fit to cry out, 'This is a damned murder, and my gorge rises at the man that haangit him.'"

"No, sir, these were not my words," cried Archie.

"What were ye'r words, then?" asked the Judge.

"I believe I said, 'I denounce it as a murder!'" said the son, "I beg your pardon—a God-defying murder. I have no wish to conceal the truth," he added, and looked his father for a moment in the face.

"God, it would only need that of it next!" cried Hermiston. "There was nothing about your gorge rising, then?"

"That was afterwards, my lord, as I was leaving the Speculative. I said I had been to see the miserable creature hanged, and my gorge rose at it."



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"Did ye, though?" said Hermiston. "And I suppose ye knew who haangit him?"

"I was present at the trial, I ought to tell you that, I ought to explain. I ask your pardon beforehand for any expression that may seem undutiful. The position in which I stand is wretched," said the unhappy hero, now fairly face to face with the business he had chosen. "I have been reading some of your cases. I was present while Jopp was tried. It was a hideous business. Father, it was a hideous thing! Grant he was vile, why should you hunt him with a vileness equal to his own? It was done with glee—that is the word—you did it with glee, and I looked on, God help me! with horror."

"You're a young gentleman that doesna approve of Caapital Punishment," said Hermiston. "—Weel, I'm an auld man that does. I was glad to get Jopp haangit, and what for would I pretend I wasna? You're all for honesty, it seems; you couldna even steik your mouth on the public street. What for should I steik mines upon the bench, the King's officer, bearing the sword, a dreid to evil-doers, as I was from the beginning, and as I will be to the end! Mair than enough of it! Heedious! I never gave twa thoughts to heediousness, I have no call to be bonny. I'm a man that gets through with my day's business, and let that suffice."

The ring of sarcasm had died out of his voice as he went on; the plain words became in-



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vested with some of the dignity of the Justice-seat.

"It would be telling you if you could say as much," the speaker resumed. "But ye cannot. "Ye've been reading some of my cases, ye say. But it was not for the law in them, it was to spy out your faither's nakedness, a fine employment in a son. You're splairging; you're running at lairge in life like a wild nowt. It's impossible you should think any longer of coming to the Bar. You're not fit for it; no splairger is. And another thing: son of mines or no son of mines, you have flung fylement in public on one of the Senators of the Coallege of Justice, and I would make it my business to see that ye were never admitted there yourself. There is a kind of a decency to be observit. Then comes the next of it—what am I to do with ye next? Ye'll have to find some kind of a trade, for I'll never support ye in idleset. What do ye fancy ye'll be fit for? The pulpit? Na, they could never get diveenity into that bloackhead. Him that the law of man whammles is no' likely to do muckle better by the law of God. What would ye make of hell? Wouldna your gorge rise at that? Na, there's no room for splairgers under the fower quarters of John Calvin. What else is there? Speak up. Have ye got nothing of your own?"

"Father, let me go to the Peninsula," said Archie. "That's all I'm fit for—to fight."

"All? quo' he!" returned the Judge. "And

it would be enough too, if I thought it. But I'll never trust ye so near the French, you that's so Frenchifeed."

"You do me injustice there, sir," said Archie. "I am loyal; I will not boast; but any interest I may have ever felt in the French——"

"Have ye been so loyal to me?" interrupted his father.

There came no reply.

"I think not," continued Hermiston. "And I would send no man to be a servant to the King, God bless him! that has proved such a shauchling son to his own faither. You can splairge here on Edinburgh street, and where's the hairm? It doesna play buff on me! And if there were twenty thousand eediots like yourself, sorrow a Duncan Jopp would hang the fewer. But there's no splairging possible in a camp; and if you were to go to it, you would find out for yourself whether Lord Well'n'ton approves of caapital punishment or not. You a sodger!" he cried, with a sudden burst of scorn. "Ye auld wife, the sodgers would bray at ye like cuddies!"

As at the drawing of a curtain, Archie was aware of some illogicality in his position, and stood abashed. He had a strong impression, besides, of the essential valour of the old gentleman before him, how conveyed it would be hard to say.

"Well, have ye no other proposeetion?" said my lord again.



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"You have taken this so calmly, sir, that I cannot but stand ashamed," began Archie.

"I'm nearer voamiting, though, than you would fancy," said my lord.

The blood rose to Archie's brow.

"I beg your pardon, I should have said that you had accepted my affront. . . . I admit it was an affront; I did not think to apologise, but I do, I ask your pardon; it will not be so again, I pass you my word of honour. . . . I should have said that I admired your magnanimity with—this—offender," Archie concluded with a gulp.

"I have no other son, ye see," said Hermiston. "A bonny one I have gotten! But I must just do the best I can wi' him, and what am I to do? If ye had been younger, I would have wheepit ye for this rideeculous exhibeetion. The way it is, I have just to grin and bear. But one thing is to be clearly understood. As a faither, I must grin and bear it; but if I had been the Lord Advocate instead of the Lord Justice-Clerk, son or no son, Mr. Erchibald Weir would have been in a jyle the night."

Archie was now dominated. Lord Hermiston was coarse and cruel; and yet the son was aware of a bloomless nobility, an ungracious abnegation of the man's self in the man's office. At every word, this sense of the greatness of Lord Hermiston's spirit struck more home; and along with it that of his own impotence, who had struck—



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and perhaps basely struck—at his own father, and not reached so far as to have even nettled him.

"I place myself in your hands without reserve," he said.

"That's the first sensible word I've had of ye the night," said Hermiston. "I can tell ye, that would have been the end of it, the one way or the other; but it's better ye should come there yourself, than what I would have had to hirstle ye. Weel, by my way of it—and my way is the best—there's just the one thing it's possible that ye might be with decency, and that's a laird. Ye'll be out of hairm's way at the least of it. If ye have to rowt, ye can rowt amang the kye; and the maist feck of the caapital punishment ye're like to come across'll be guddling trouts. Now, I'm for no idle lairdies; every man has to work, if it's only at peddling ballants; to work, or to be wheepit, or to be haangit. If I set ye down at Hermiston, I'll have to see you work that place the way it has never been workit yet; ye must ken about the sheep like a herd; ye must be my grieve there, and I'll see that I gain by ye. Is that understood?"

"I will do my best," said Archie.

"Well, then, I'll send Kirstie word the morn, and ye can go yourself the day after," said Hermiston. "And just try to be less of an eediot!" he concluded, with a freezing smile, and turned immediately to the papers on his desk.



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## CHAPTER IV

### OPINIONS OF THE BENCH

LATE the same night, after a disordered walk, Archie was admitted into Lord Glenalmond's dining-room where he sat, with a book upon his knee, beside three frugal coals of fire. In his robes upon the bench, Glenalmond had a certain air of burliness: plucked of these, it was a maypole of a man that rose unsteadily from his chair to give his visitor welcome. Archie had suffered much in the last days, he had suffered again that evening; his face was white and drawn, his eyes wild and dark. But Lord Glenalmond greeted him without the least mark of surprise or curiosity.

"Come in, come in," said he. "Come in and take a seat. Carstairs" (to his servant), "make up the fire, and then you can bring a bit of supper," and again to Archie, with a very trivial accent: "I was half expecting you," he added.

"No supper," said Archie. "It is impossible that I should eat."

"Not impossible," said the tall old man, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "and, if you will believe me, necessary."



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"You know what brings me?" said Archie, as soon as the servant had left the room.

"I have a guess, I have a guess," replied Glenalmond. "We will talk of it presently—when Carstairs has come and gone, and you have had a piece of my good Cheddar cheese and a pull at the porter tankard: not before."

"It is impossible I should eat," repeated Archie.

"Tut, tut!" said Lord Glenalmond. "You have eaten nothing to-day, and, I venture to add, nothing yesterday. There is no case that may not be made worse; this may be a very disagreeable business, but if you were to fall sick and die, it would be still more so, and for all concerned—for all concerned."

"I see you must know all," said Archie. "Where did you hear it?"

"In the mart of scandal, in the Parliament House," said Glenalmond. "It runs riot below among the bar and the public, but it sifts up to us upon the bench, and rumour has some of her voices even in the divisions."

Carstairs returned at this moment, and rapidly laid out a little supper; during which Lord Glenalmond spoke at large and a little vaguely on indifferent subjects, so that it might be rather said of him that he made a cheerful noise, than that he contributed to human conversation; and Archie sat upon the other side, not heeding him, brooding over his wrongs and errors.



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But so soon as the servant was gone, he broke forth again at once. "Who told my father? Who dared to tell him? Could it have been you?"

"No, it was not me," said the Judge; "although—to be quite frank with you, and after I had seen and warned you—it might have been me. I believe it was Glenkindie."

"That shrimp!" cried Archie.

"As you say, that shrimp," returned my lord; "although really it is scarce a fitting mode of expression for one of the Senators of the College of Justice. We were hearing the parties in a long, crucial case, before the fifteen; Creech was moving at some length for an infeftment; when I saw Glenkindie lean forward to Hermiston with his hand over his mouth and make him a secret communication. No one could have guessed its nature from your father; from Glenkindie, yes, his malice sparked out of him a little grossly. But your father, no. A man of granite. The next moment he pounced upon Creech. 'Mr. Creech,' says he, 'I'll take a look of that sasine,' and for thirty minutes after," said Glenalmond, with a smile, "Messrs. Creech and Co. were fighting a pretty uphill battle, which resulted, I need hardly add, in their total rout. The case was dismissed. No, I doubt if ever I heard Hermiston better inspired. He was literally rejoicing *in apicibus juris*."

Archie was able to endure no longer. He thrust



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his plate away and interrupted the deliberate and insignificant stream of talk. "Here," he said, "I have made a fool of myself, if I have not made something worse. Do you judge between us—judge between a father and a son. I can speak to you; it is not like. . . . I will tell you what I feel and what I mean to do; and you shall be the judge," he repeated.

"I decline jurisdiction," said Glenalmond with extreme seriousness. "But, my dear boy, if it will do you any good to talk, and if it will interest you at all to hear what I may choose to say when I have heard you, I am quite at your command. Let an old man say it, for once, and not need to blush: I love you like a son."

There came a sudden sharp sound in Archie's throat. "Ay," he cried, "and there it is! Love! Like a son! And how do you think I love my father?"

"Quietly, quietly," says my lord.

"I will be very quiet," replied Archie. "And I will be baldly frank. I do not love my father; I wonder sometimes if I do not hate him. There's my shame; perhaps my sin; at least, and in the sight of God, not my fault. How was I to love him? He has never spoken to me, never smiled upon me; I do not think he ever touched me. You know the way he talks? You do not talk so, yet you can sit and hear him without shuddering, and I cannot. My soul is sick when he begins with it; I could smite him in the mouth.



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And all that's nothing. I was at the trial of this Jopp. You were not there, but you must have heard him often; the man's notorious for it, for being—look at my position! he's my father and this is how I have to speak of him—notorious for being a brute and cruel and a coward. Lord Glenalmond, I give you my word, when I came out of that Court, I longed to die—the shame of it was beyond my strength: but I—I——" he rose from his seat and began to pace the room in a disorder. "Well, who am I? A boy, who have never been tried, have never done anything except this twopenny impotent folly with my father. But I tell you, my lord, and I know myself, I am at least that kind of a man—or that kind of a boy, if you prefer it—that I could die in torments rather than that any one should suffer as that scoundrel suffered. Well, and what have I done? I see it now. I have made a fool of myself, as I said in the beginning; and I have gone back, and asked my father's pardon, and placed myself wholly in his hands—and he has sent me to Hermiston," with a wretched smile, "for life, I suppose—and what can I say? he strikes me as having done quite right, and let me off better than I had deserved."

"My poor, dear boy!" observed Glenalmond. "My poor dear and, if you will allow me to say so, very foolish boy! You are only discovering where you are; to one of your temperament, or of mine, a painful discovery. The world was not



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made for us; it was made for ten hundred millions of men, all different from each other and from us; there's no royal road there, we just have to sclamber and tumble. Don't think that I am at all disposed to be surprised; don't suppose that I ever think of blaming you; indeed I rather admire! But there fall to be offered one or two observations on the case which occur to me and which (if you will listen to them dispassionately) may be the means of inducing you to view the matter more calmly. First of all, I cannot acquit you of a good deal of what is called intolerance. You seem to have been very much offended because your father talks a little sculduddery after dinner, which it is perfectly licit for him to do, and which (although I am not very fond of it myself) appears to be entirely an affair of taste. Your father, I scarcely like to remind you, since it is so trite a commonplace, is older than yourself. At least, he is *major* and *sui juris*, and may please himself in the matter of his conversation. And, do you know, I wonder if he might not have as good an answer against you and me? We say we sometimes find him coarse, but I suspect he might retort that he finds us always dull. Perhaps a relevant exception."

He beamed on Archie, but no smile could be elicited.

"And now," proceeded the Judge, "for 'Archibald on Capital Punishment.' This is a very



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plausible academic opinion; of course I do not and I cannot hold it; but that's not to say that many able and excellent persons have not done so in the past. Possibly, in the past, also, I may have a little dipped myself in the same heresy. My third client, or possibly my fourth, was the means of a return in my opinions. I never saw the man I more believed in; I would have put my hand in the fire, I would have gone to the cross for him; and when it came to trial he was gradually pictured before me, by undeniable probation, in the light of so gross, so cold-blooded, and so black-hearted a villain, that I had a mind to have cast my brief upon the table. I was then boiling against the man with even a more tropical temperature than I had been boiling for him. But I said to myself: 'No, you have taken up his case; and because you have changed your mind it must not be suffered to let drop. All that rich tide of eloquence that you prepared last night with so much enthusiasm is out of place, and yet you must not desert him, you must say something.' So I said something, and I got him off. It made my reputation. But an experience of that kind is formative. A man must not bring his passions to the bar—or to the bench."

This story had slightly rekindled Archie's interest. "I could never deny," he began— "I mean I can conceive that some men would be better dead. But who are we to know all the springs of God's unfortunate creatures? Who



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are we to trust ourselves where it seems that God himself must think twice before He treads, and to do it with delight? Yes, with delight. *Tigris ut aspera.*"

"Perhaps not a pleasant spectacle," said Glenalmond. "And yet, do you know, I think somehow a great one."

"I've had a long talk with him to-night," said Archie.

"I was supposing so," said Glenalmond.

"And he struck me—— I cannot deny that he struck me as something very big," pursued the son. "Yes, he is big. He never spoke about himself; only about me. I suppose I admired him. The dreadful part——"

"Suppose we did not talk about that," interrupted Glenalmond. "You know it very well, it cannot in any way help that you should brood upon it, and I sometimes wonder whether you and I—who are a pair of sentimentalists—are quite good judges of plain men."

"How do you mean?" asked Archie.

"*Fair* judges, I mean," replied Glenalmond. "Can we be just to them? Do we not ask too much? There was a word of yours just now that impressed me a little when you asked me who we were to know all the springs of God's unfortunate creatures. You applied that, as I understood, to capital cases only. But does it—I ask myself—does it not apply all through? Is it any less difficult to judge of a good man or of a half-



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good man, than of the worst criminal at the bar? And may not each have relevant excuses?"

"Ah, but we do not talk of punishing the good," cried Archie.

"No, we do not talk of it," said Glenalmond. "But I think we do it. Your father, for instance."

"You think I have punished him?" cried Archie.

Lord Glenalmond bowed his head.

"I think I have," said Archie. "And the worst is, I think he feels it! How much, who can tell, with such a being? But I think he does."

"And I am sure of it," said Glenalmond.

"Has he spoken to you, then?" cried Archie.

"Oh, no," replied the Judge.

"I tell you honestly," said Archie, "I want to make it up to him. I will go, I have already pledged myself to go, to Hermiston. That was to him. And now I pledge myself to you, in the sight of God, that I will close my mouth on capital punishment and all other subjects where our views may clash, for—how long shall I say? when shall I have sense enough?—ten years. Is that well?"

"It is well," said my lord.

"As far as it goes," said Archie. "It is enough as regards myself, it is to lay down enough of my conceit. But as regards him, whom I have publicly insulted? What am I to do to him?



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How do you pay attentions to a—an Alp like that?"

"Only in one way," replied Glenalmond. "Only by obedience, punctual, prompt, and scrupulous."

"And I promise that he shall have it," answered Archie. "I offer you my hand in pledge of it."

"And I take your hand as a solemnity," replied the Judge. "God bless you, my dear, and enable you to keep your promise. God guide you in the true way, and spare your days, and preserve to you your honest heart." At that, he kissed the young man upon the forehead in a gracious, distant, antiquated way; and instantly launched, with a marked change of voice, into another subject. "And now, let us replenish the tankard; and I believe, if you will try my Cheddar again, you would find you had a better appetite. The Court has spoken, and the case is dismissed."

"No, there is one thing I must say," cried Archie. "I must say it in justice to himself. I know—I believe faithfully, slavishly, after our talk—he will never ask me anything unjust. I am proud to feel it, that we have that much in common, I am proud to say it to you."

The Judge, with shining eyes, raised his tankard. "And I think perhaps that we might permit ourselves a toast," said he. "I should like to propose the health of a man very different



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from me and very much my superior—a man from whom I have often differed, who has often (in the trivial expression) rubbed me the wrong way, but whom I have never ceased to respect and, I may add, to be not a little afraid of. Shall I give you his name?"

"The Lord Justice-Clerk, Lord Hermiston," said Archie, almost with gaiety; and the pair drank the toast deeply.

It was not precisely easy to re-establish, after these emotional passages, the natural flow of conversation. But the Judge eked out what was wanting with kind looks, produced his snuff-box (which was very rarely seen) to fill in a pause, and at last, despairing of any further social success, was upon the point of getting down a book to read a favourite passage, when there came a rather startling summons at the front door, and Carstairs ushered in my Lord Glenkindie, hot from a midnight supper. I am not aware that Glenkindie was ever a beautiful object, being short, and gross-bodied, and with an expression of sensuality comparable to a bear's. At that moment, coming in hissing from many potations, with a flushed countenance and blurred eyes, he was strikingly contrasted with the tall, pale, kingly figure of Glenalmond. A rush of confused thought came over Archie—of shame that this was one of his father's elect friends; of pride, that at the least of it Hermiston could carry his liquor; and last of all, of rage,



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that he should have here under his eye the man that had betrayed him. And then that, too, passed away; and he sat quiet, biding his opportunity.

The tipsy senator plunged at once into an explanation with Glenalmond. There was a point reserved yesterday, he had been able to make neither head nor tail of it, and seeing lights in the house, he had just dropped in for a glass of porter—and at this point he became aware of the third person. Archie saw the cod's mouth and the blunt lips of Glenkindie gape at him for a moment, and the recognition twinkle in his eyes.

"Who's this?" said he. "What? is this possibly you, Don Quickshot? And how are ye? And how's your father? And what's all this we hear of you? It seems you're a most extraordinary leveller, by all tales. No king, no parliaments, and your gorge rises at the macers, worthy men! Hoot, too! Dear, dear me! Your father's son, too! Most rideekulous!"

Archie was on his feet, flushing a little at the reappearance of his unhappy figure of speech, but perfectly self-possessed. "My lord—and you, Lord Glenalmond, my dear friend," he began, "this is a happy chance for me, that I can make my confession and offer my apologies to two of you at once."

"Ah, but I don't know about that. Confession? It'll be judeecial, my young friend," cried the jocular Glenkindie. "And I'm afraid to



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listen to ye. Think if ye were to make me a coanvert!"

"If you would allow me, my lord," returned Archie, "what I have to say is very serious to me; and be pleased to be humorous after I am gone."

"Remember, I'll hear nothing against the macers!" put in the incorrigible Glenkindie.

But Archie continued as though he had not spoken. "I have played, both yesterday and to-day, a part for which I can only offer the excuse of youth. I was so unwise as to go to an execution; it seems, I made a scene at the gallows; not content with which, I spoke the same night in a college society against capital punishment. This is the extent of what I have done, and in case you hear more alleged against me, I protest my innocence. I have expressed my regret already to my father, who is so good as to pass my conduct over—in a degree, and upon the condition that I am to leave my law studies." . . .



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# CHAPTER V

## WINTER ON THE MOORS

### *1. At Hermiston*

THE road to Hermiston runs for a great part of the way up the valley of a stream, a favourite with anglers and with midges, full of falls and pools, and shaded by willows and natural woods of birch. Here and there, but at great distances, a byway branches off, and a gaunt farmhouse may be descried above in a fold of the hill; but the more part of the time, the road would be quite empty of passage and the hills of habitation. Hermiston parish is one of the least populous in Scotland; and, by the time you came that length, you would scarce be surprised at the inimitable smallness of the kirk, a dwarfish, ancient place seated for fifty, and standing in a green by the burn-side among two-score grave-stones. The manse close by, although no more than a cottage, is surrounded by the brightness of a flower-garden and the straw roofs of bees; and the whole colony, kirk and manse, garden and graveyard, finds harbourage in a grove of rowans, and is all the year round in a great



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silence broken only by the drone of the bees, the tinkle of the burn, and the bell on Sundays. A mile beyond the kirk the road leaves the valley by a precipitous ascent, and brings you a little after to the place of Hermiston, where it comes to an end in the back-yard before the coach-house. All beyond and about is the great field of the hills; the plover, the curlew, and the lark cry there; the wind blows as it blows in a ship's rigging, hard and cold and pure; and the hill-tops huddle one behind another like a herd of cattle into the sunset.

The house was sixty years old, unsightly, comfortable; a farmyard and a kitchen-garden on the left, with a fruit wall where little hard green pears came to their maturity about the end of October.

The policy (as who should say the park) was of some extent, but very ill reclaimed; heather and moorfowl had crossed the boundary wall and spread and roosted within; and it would have tasked a landscape gardener to say where policy ended and unpolicied nature began. My lord had been led by the influence of Mr. Sheriff Scott into a considerable design of planting; many acres were accordingly set out with fir, and the little feathery besoms gave a false scale and lent a strange air of a toy-shop to the moors. A great, rooty sweetness of bogs was in the air, and at all seasons an infinite melancholy piping of hill birds. Standing so high and with so little shelter, it was



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a cold, exposed house, splashed by showers, drenched by continuous rains that made the gutters to spout, beaten upon and buffeted by all the winds of heaven; and the prospect would be often black with tempest, and often white with the snows of winter. But the house was wind and weather proof, the hearths were kept bright, and the rooms pleasant with live fires of peat; and Archie might sit of an evening and hear the squalls bugle on the moorland, and watch the fire prosper in the earthy fuel, and the smoke winding up the chimney, and drink deep of the pleasures of shelter.

Solitary as the place was, Archie did not want neighbours. Every night, if he chose, he might go down to the manse and share a "brewst" of toddy with the minister—a hare-brained ancient gentleman, long and light and still active, though his knees were loosened with age, and his voice broke continually in childish trebles—and his lady wife, a heavy, comely dame, without a word to say for herself beyond good-even and good-day. Harum-scarum, clodpole young lairds of the neighbourhood paid him the compliment of a visit. Young Hay of Romanes rode down to call, on his crop-eared pony; young Pringle of Drumanno came up on his bony grey. Hay remained on the hospitable field, and must be carried to bed; Pringle got somehow to his saddle about 3 a. m., and (as Archie stood with the lamp on the upper doorstep) lurched, uttered a sense-



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less view halloa, and vanished out of the small circle of illumination like a wraith. Yet a minute or two longer the clatter of his break-neck flight was audible, then it was cut off by the intervening steepness of the hill; and again, a great while after, the renewed beating of phantom horse-hoofs, far in the valley of the Hermiston, showed that the horse at least, if not his rider, was still on the homeward way.

There was a Tuesday club at the "Crosskeys" in Crossmichael, where the young bloods of the countryside congregated and drank deep on a percentage of the expense, so that he was left gainer who should have drunk the most. Archie had no great mind to his diversion, but he took it like a duty laid upon him, went with a decent regularity, did his manfullest with the liquor, held up his head in the local jests, and got home again and was able to put up his horse, to the admiration of Kirstie and the lass that helped her. He dined at Driffel, supped at Windielaws. He went to the New Year's ball at Huntsfield and was made welcome, and thereafter rode to hounds with my Lord Muirfell, upon whose name, as that of a legitimate Lord of Parliament, in a work so full of Lords of Session, my pen should pause reverently. Yet the same fate attended him here as in Edinburgh. The habit of solitude tends to perpetuate itself, and an austerity of which he was quite unconscious, and a pride which seemed arrogance and perhaps was chiefly



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shyness, discouraged and offended his new companions. Hay did not return more than twice, Pringle never at all, and there came a time when Archie even desisted from the Tuesday Club, and became in all things—what he had had the name of almost from the first—the Recluse of Hermiston. High-nosed Miss Pringle of Drumanno and high-stepping Miss Marshall of the Mains were understood to have had a difference of opinion about him the day after the ball—he was none the wiser, he could not suppose himself to be remarked by these entrancing ladies. At the ball itself my Lord Muirfell's daughter, the Lady Flora, spoke to him twice, and the second time with a touch of appeal, so that her colour rose and her voice trembled a little in his ear, like a passing grace in music. He stepped back with a heart on fire, coldly and not ungracefully excused himself, and a little after watched her dancing with young Drumanno of the empty laugh, and was harrowed at the sight, and raged to himself that this was a world in which it was given to Drumanno to please, and to himself only to stand aside and envy. He seemed excluded, as of right, from the favour of such society—seemed to extinguish mirth wherever he came, and was quick to feel the wound, and desist, and retire into solitude. If he had but understood the figure he presented, and the impression he made on these bright eyes and tender hearts; if he had but guessed that the Recluse



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of Hermiston, young, graceful, well-spoken, but always cold, stirred the maidens of the county with the charm of Byronism when Byronism was new, it may be questioned whether his destiny might not even yet have been modified. It may be questioned, and I think it should be doubted. It was in his horoscope to be parsimonious of pain to himself, or of the chance of pain, even to the avoidance of any opportunity of pleasure; to have a Roman sense of duty, an instinctive aristocracy of manners and taste; to be the son of Adam Weir and Jean Rutherford.

### 2. *Kirstie*

Kirstie was now over fifty, and might have sat to a sculptor. Long of limb and still light of foot, deep-breasted, robust-loined, her golden hair not yet mingled with any trace of silver, the years had but caressed and embellished her. By the lines of a rich and vigorous maternity, she seemed destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of their children; and behold, by the iniquity of fate, she had passed through her youth alone, and drew near to the confines of age, a childless woman. The tender ambitions that she had received at birth had been, by time and disappointment, diverted into a certain barren zeal of industry and fury of interference. She carried her thwarted ardours into housework, she washed floors with her empty heart. If she could not win the love of one with love, she must domi-



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nate all by her temper. Hasty, wordy, and wrathful, she had a drawn quarrel with most of her neighbours, and with the others not much more than armed neutrality. The grieve's wife had been "sneisty"; the sister of the gardener, who kept house for him, had shown herself "upsitten"; and she wrote to Lord Hermiston about once a year demanding the discharge of the offenders, and justifying the demand by much wealth of detail. For it must not be supposed that the quarrel rested with the wife and did not take in the husband also—or with the gardener's sister, and did not speedily include the gardener himself. As the upshot of all this petty quarrelling and intemperate speech, she was practically excluded (like a lightkeeper on his tower) from the comforts of human association; except with her own indoor drudge, who, being but a lassie and entirely at her mercy, must submit to the shifty weather of "the mistress's" moods without complaint, and be willing to take buffets or caresses according to the temper of the hour. To Kirstie, thus situate and in the Indian summer of her heart, which was slow to submit to age, the gods sent this equivocal good thing of Archie's presence. She had known him in the cradle and paddled him when he misbehaved; and yet, as she had not so much as set eyes on him since he was eleven and had his last serious illness, the tall, slender, refined, and rather melancholy young gentleman of twenty came upon



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her with the shock of a new acquaintance. He was "Young Hermiston," "the laird himsel'"; he had an air of distinctive superiority, a cold straight glance of his black eyes, that abashed the woman's tantrums in the beginning, and therefore the possibility of any quarrel was excluded. He was new, and therefore immediately aroused her curiosity; he was reticent, and kept it awake. And lastly he was dark and she fair, and he was male and she female, the everlasting fountains of interest.

Her feeling partook of the loyalty of a clanswoman, the hero-worship of a maiden aunt, and the idolatry due to a god. No matter what he had asked of her, ridiculous or tragic, she would have done it and joyed to do it. Her passion, for it was nothing less, entirely filled her. It was a rich physical pleasure to make his bed or light his lamp for him when he was absent, to pull off his wet boots or wait on him at dinner when he returned. A young man who should have so doted on the idea, moral and physical, of any woman, might be properly described as being in love, head and heels, and would have behaved himself accordingly. But Kirstie—though her heart leaped at his coming footsteps—though, when he patted her shoulder, her face brightened for the day—had not a hope or thought beyond the present moment and its perpetuation to the end of time. Till the end of time she would have had nothing altered, but still continue delighted-



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ly to serve her idol, and be repaid (say twice in the month) with a clap on the shoulder.

I have said her heart leaped—it is the accepted phrase. But rather, when she was alone in any chamber of the house, and heard his foot passing on the corridors, something in her bosom rose slowly until her breath was suspended, and as slowly fell again with a deep sigh, when the steps had passed and she was disappointed of her eyes' desire. This perpetual hunger and thirst of his presence kept her all day on the alert. When he went forth at morning, she would stand and follow him with admiring looks. As it grew late and drew to the time of his return, she would steal forth to a corner of the policy wall and be seen standing there sometimes by the hour together, gazing with shaded eyes, waiting the exquisite and barren pleasure of his view a mile off on the mountains. When at night she had trimmed and gathered the fire, turned down his bed, and laid out his night-gear—when there was no more to be done for the king's pleasure, but to remember him fervently in her usually very tepid prayers, and go to bed brooding upon his perfections, his future career, and what she should give him the next day for dinner—there still remained before her one more opportunity; she was still to take in the tray and say good-night. Sometimes Archie would glance up from his book with a pre-occupied nod and a perfunctory salutation which was in truth a dismissal;



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sometimes—and by degrees more often—the volume would be laid aside, he would meet her coming with a look of relief; and the conversation would be engaged, last out the supper, and be prolonged till the small hours by the waning fire. It was no wonder that Archie was fond of company after his solitary days; and Kirstie, upon her side, exerted all the arts of her vigorous nature to ensnare his attention. She would keep back some piece of news during dinner to be fired off with the entrance of the supper tray, and form as it were the *lever de rideau* of the evening's entertainment. Once he had heard her tongue wag, she made sure of the result. From one subject to another she moved by insidious transitions, fearing the least silence, fearing almost to give him time for an answer lest it should slip into a hint of separation. Like so many people of her class, she was a brave narrator; her place was on the hearth-rug and she made it a rostrum, miming her stories as she told them, fitting them with vital detail, spinning them out with endless "quo' he's" and "quo' she's," her voice sinking into a whisper over the supernatural or the horrific; until she would suddenly spring up in affected surprise, and pointing to the clock, "Mercy, Mr. Archie!" she would say, "Whatten a time o' night is this of it! God forgive me for a daft wife!" So it befell, by good management, that she was not only the first to begin these nocturnal conversations, but invariably the first to



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break them off; so she managed to retire and not to be dismissed.

### 3. *A Border Family*

Such an unequal intimacy has never been uncommon in Scotland, where the clan spirit survives; where the servant tends to spend her life in the same service, a helpmeet at first, then a tyrant, and at last a pensioner; where, besides, she is not necessarily destitute of the pride of birth, but is, perhaps, like Kirstie, a connection of her master's, and at least knows the legend of her own family, and may count kinship with some illustrious dead. For that is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forbears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. No more characteristic instance could be found than in the family of Kirstie Elliott. They were all, and Kirstie the first of all, ready and eager to pour forth the particulars of their genealogy, embellished with every detail that memory had handed down or fancy fabricated; and, behold! from every ramification of that tree there dangled a halter. The Elliotts themselves have had a chequered history; but these Elliotts deduced, besides, from three of the most unfortunate of the border clans—the Nicksons, the Ellwalds,



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and the Crozers. One ancestor after another might be seen appearing a moment out of the rain and the hill mist upon his furtive business, speeding home, perhaps, with a paltry booty of lame horses and lean kine, or squealing and dealing death in some moorland feud of the ferrets and the wildcats. One after another closed his obscure adventures in mid-air, triced up to the arm of the royal gibbet or the Baron's dule-tree. For the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurts nobody but jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Crozers. The exhilaration of their exploits seemed to haunt the memories of their descendants alone, and the shame to be forgotten. Pride glowed in their bosoms to publish their relationship to "Andrew Ellwald of the Laverockstanes, called 'Unchancy Dand,' who was justifeed wi' seeven mair of the same name at Jeddart in the days of King James the Sax." In all this tissue of crime and misfortune, the Elliotts of Cauldstaneslap had one boast which must appear legitimate: the males were gallows-birds, born outlaws, petty thieves, and deadly brawlers; but according to the same tradition, the females were all chaste and faithful. The power of ancestry on the character is not limited to the inheritance of cells. If I buy ancestors by the gross from the benevolence of Lion King at Arms, my grandson (if he is Scottish) will feel a quickening emulation of their deeds. The men



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of the Elliotts were proud, lawless, violent as of right, cherishing and prolonging a tradition. In like manner with the women. And the woman, essentially passionate and reckless, who crouched on the rug in the shine of the peat fire, telling these tales, had cherished through life a wild integrity of virtue.

Her father Gilbert had been deeply pious, a savage disciplinarian in the antique style, and withal a notorious smuggler. "I mind when I was a bairn getting mony a skelp and being shoo'd to bed like pou'try," she would say. "That would be when the lads and their bit kegs were on the road. We've had the riffraff of two-three counties in our kitchen, mony's the time, betwix' the twelve and the three; and their lanterns would be standing in the forecourt, ay, a score o' them at once. But there was nae ungodly talk permitted at Cauldstaneslap; my faither was a consistent man in walk and conversation; just let slip an aith, and there was the door to ye! He had that zeal for the Lord, it was a fair wonder to hear him pray, but the faim'ly has aye had a gift that way." This father was twice married, once to a dark woman of the old Ellwald stock, by whom he had Gilbert, presently of Cauldstaneslap; and, secondly, to the mother of Kirstie. "He was an auld man when he married her, a fell auld man wi' a muckle voice—you could hear him rowting from the top o' the Kye-skairs," she said; "but for her,



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it appears, she was a perfit wonder. It was gentle blood she had, Mr. Archie, for it was your ain. The countryside gaed gyte about her and her gowden hair. Mines is no' to be mentioned wi' it, and there's few weemen has mair hair than what I have, or yet a bonnier colour. Often would I tell my dear Miss Jeannie—that was your mother, dear, she was cruel ta'en up about her hair, it was unco tender, ye see—'Hoots, Miss Jeannie,' I would say, 'just fling your washes and your French dentifrishes in the back o' the fire, for that's the place for them; and awa' down to a burn-side, and wash yersel' in cauld hill water, and dry your bonny hair in the caller wind o' the muirs, the way that my mother aye washed hers, and that I have aye made it a practice to have washen mines—just you do what I tell ye, my dear, and ye'll give me news of it! Ye'll have hair, and routh of hair, a pigtail as thick's my arm,' I said, 'and the bonniest colour like the clear gowden guineas, so as the lads in kirk'll no' can keep their eyes off it!' Weel, it lasted out her time, puir thing! I cuttit a lock of it upon her corp that was lying there sae cauld. I'll show it ye some of thir days if ye're good. But, as I was sayin', my mither——"

On the death of the father there remained golden-haired Kirstie, who took service with her distant kinsfolk, the Rutherfords, and black-a-vised Gilbert, twenty years older, who farmed the Cauldstaneslap, married, and begot four sons



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between 1773 and 1784, and a daughter, like a postscript, in '97, the year of Camperdown and Cape St. Vincent. It seemed it was a tradition of the family to wind up with a belated girl. In 1804, at the age of sixty, Gilbert met an end that might be called heroic. He was due home from market any time from eight at night till five in the morning, and in any condition from the quarrelsome to the speechless, for he maintained to that age the goodly customs of the Scots farmer. It was known on this occasion that he had a good bit of money to bring home; the word had gone round loosely. The laird had shown his guineas, and if anybody had but noticed it, there was an ill-looking, vagabond crew, the scum of Edinburgh, that drew out of the market long ere it was dusk and took the hill-road by Hermiston, where it was not to be believed that they had lawful business. One of the country-side, one Dickieson, they took with them to be their guide, and dear he paid for it! Of a sudden, in the ford of the Broken Dykes, this vermin clan fell on the laird, six to one, and him three parts asleep, having drunk hard. But it is ill to catch an Elliott. For a while, in the night and the black water that was deep as to his saddle-girths, he wrought with his staff like a smith at his stithy, and great was the sound of oaths and blows. With that the ambuscade was burst, and he rode for home with a pistol-ball in him, three knife-wounds, the loss of his front teeth, a



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broken rib and bridle, and a dying horse. That was a race with death that the laird rode. In the mirk night, with his broken bridle and his head swimming, he dug his spurs to the rowels in the horse's side, and the horse, that was even worse off than himself, the poor creature! screamed out loud like a person as he went, so that the hills echoed with it, and the folks at Cauldstaneslap got to their feet about the table and looked at each other with white faces. The horse fell dead at the yard gate, the laird won the length of the house and fell there on the threshold. To the son that raised him he gave the bag of money. "Hae," said he. All the way up the thieves had seemed to him to be at his heels, but now the hallucination left him—he saw them again in the place of the ambuscade—and the thirst of vengeance seized on his dying mind. Raising himself and pointing with an imperious finger into the black night from which he had come, he uttered the single command, "Brocken Dykes," and fainted. He had never been loved, but he had been feared in honour. At that sight, at that word, gasped out at them from a toothless and bleeding mouth, the old Elliott spirit awoke with a shout in the four sons. "Wanting the hat," continues my author, Kirstie, whom I but haltingly follow, for she told this tale like one inspired, "wanting guns, for there wasna twa grains o' pouder in the house, wi' nae mair weepons than their sticks into their



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hands, the fower o' them took the road. Only Hob, and that was the eldest, hunkered at the door-sill where the blood had rin, fyled his hand wi' it, and haddit it up to Heeven in the way o' the auld Border aith. 'Hell shall have her ain again this nicht!' he raired, and rode forth upon his arrand." It was three miles to Broken Dykes, down hill, and a sore road. Kirstie had seen men from Edinburgh dismounting there in plain day to lead their horses. But the four brothers rode it as if Auld Hornie were behind and Heaven in front. Come to the ford, and there was Dickieson. By all tales, he was not dead, but breathed and reared upon his elbow, and cried out to them for help. It was at a graceless face that he asked mercy. As soon as Hob saw, by the glint of the lantern, the eyes shining and the whiteness of the teeth in the man's face, "Damn you!" says he; "ye hae your teeth, hae ye?" and rode his horse to and fro upon that human remnant. Beyond that, Dandie must dismount with the lantern to be their guide; he was the youngest son, scarce twenty at the time. "A' nicht long they gaed in the wet heath and jennipers, and whaur they gaed they neither knew nor cared, but just followed the bluidstains and the footprints o' their faither's murderers. And a' nicht Dandie had his nose to the grund like a tyke, and the ithers followed and spak' naething, neither black nor white. There was nae noise to be heard, but



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just the sough of the swalled burns, and Hob, the dour yin, risping his teeth as he gaed." With the first glint of the morning they saw they were on the drove road, and at that the four stopped and had a dram to their breakfasts, for they knew that Dand must have guided them right, and the rogues could be but little ahead, hot foot for Edinburgh by the way of the Pentland Hills. By eight o'clock they had word of them—a shepherd had seen four men "uncoly mishandled" go by in the last hour. "That's yin a piece," says Clem, and swung his cudgel. "Five o' them!" says Hob. "God's death, but the faither was a man! And him drunk!" And then there befell them what my author termed "a sair misbegowk," for they were overtaken by a posse of mounted neighbours come to aid in the pursuit. Four sour faces looked on the reinforcement. "The deil's broughten you!" said Clem, and they rode thenceforward in the rear of the party with hanging heads. Before ten they had found and secured the rogues, and by three of the afternoon, as they rode up the Vennel with their prisoners, they were aware of a concourse of people bearing in their midst something that dripped. "For the boady of the saxt," pursued Kirstie, "wi' his head smashed like a hazel-nit, had been a' that nicht in the chairge o' Hermiston Water, and it dunting it on the stanes, and grunding it on the shallows, and flinging the deid thing heels-ower-hurdie at the Fa's o'



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Spango; and in the first o' the day Tweed had got a hold o' him and carried him off like a wind, for it was uncoly swalled and raced wi' him, bobbing under brae-sides, and was long playing with the creature in the drumlie lynns under the castle, and at the hinder end of all cuist him up on the starling of Crossmichael brig. Sae there they were a' thegither at last (for Dickieson had been brought in on a cart long syne), and folk could see what mainner o' man my brither had been that had held his head again' sax and saved the siller, and him drunk!" Thus died of honourable injuries and in the savour of fame Gilbert Elliott of the Cauldstaneslap; but his sons had scarce less glory out of the business. Their savage haste, the skill with which Dand had found and followed the trail, the barbarity to the wounded Dickieson (which was like an open secret in the county) and the doom which it was currently supposed they had intended for the others, struck and stirred popular imagination. Some century earlier the last of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight and chase; but the spirit was dead, or had been reincarnated already in Mr. Sheriff Scott, and the degenerate moorsmen must be content to tell the tale in prose and to make of the "Four Black Brothers" a unit after the fashion of the "Twelve Apostles" or the "Three Musketeers."

Robert, Gilbert, Clement, and Andrew—in the



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proper Border diminutive, Hob, Gib, Clem, and Dand Elliott—these ballad heroes had much in common; in particular, their high sense of the family and the family honour; but they went diverse ways, and prospered and failed in different businesses. According to Kirstie, "they had a' bees in their bonnets but Hob." Hob the laird was, indeed, essentially a decent man. An elder of the Kirk, nobody had heard an oath upon his lips, save, perhaps, thrice or so at the sheep-washing, since the chase of his father's murderers. The figure he had shown on that eventful night disappeared as if swallowed by a trap. He who had ecstatically dipped his hand in the red blood, he who had ridden down Dickieson, became, from that moment on, a stiff and rather graceless model of the rustic proprieties; cannily profiting by the high war prices, and yearly stowing away a little nest-egg in the bank against calamity; approved of and sometimes consulted by the greater lairds for the massive and placid sense of what he said, when he could be induced to say anything; and particularly valued by the minister, Mr. Torrance, as a right-hand man in the parish, and a model to parents. The transfiguration had been for the moment only; some Barbarossa, some old Adam of our ancestors, sleeps in all of us till the fit circumstance shall call it into action; and for as sober as he now seemed, Hob had given once for all the measure of the devil that haunted him. He was married,



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and, by reason of the effulgence of that legendary night, was adored by his wife. He had a mob of little lusty, barefoot children who marched in a caravan the long miles to school, the stages of whose pilgrimage were marked by acts of spoliation and mischief, and who were qualified in the countryside as "fair pests." But in the house, if "faither was in," they were quiet as mice. In short, Hob moved through life in a great peace—the reward of any one who shall have killed his man, with any formidable and figurative circumstance, in the midst of a country gagged and swaddled with civilisation.

It was a current remark that the Elliotts were "guid and bad, like sanguishes"; and certainly there was a curious distinction, the men of business coming alternately with the dreamers. The second brother, Gib, was a weaver by trade, had gone out early into the world to Edinburgh, and come home again with his wings singed. There was an exaltation in his nature which had led him to embrace with enthusiasm the principles of the French Revolution, and had ended by bringing him under the hawse of my Lord Hermiston in that furious onslaught of his upon the Liberals, which sent Muir and Palmer into exile and dashed the party into chaff. It was whispered that my lord, in his great scorn for the movement and prevailed upon a little by a sense of neighbourliness, had given Gib a hint. Meeting him one day in the Potterrow, my lord had



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stopped in front of him. "Gib, ye eediot," he had said, "what's this I hear of you? Poalitics, poalitics, poalitics, weaver's poalitics, is the way of it, I hear. If ye arena a' thegither dozened with eediocy, ye'll gang your ways back to Cauldstaneslap, and ca' your loom, and ca' your loom, man!" And Gilbert had taken him at the word and returned, with an expedition almost to be called flight, to the house of his father. The clearest of his inheritance was that family gift of prayer of which Kirstie had boasted; and the baffled politician now turned his attention to religious matters—or, as others said, to heresy and schism. Every Sunday morning he was in Crossmichael, where he had gathered together, one by one, a sect of about a dozen persons, who called themselves "God's Remnant of the True Faithful," or, for short, "God's Remnant." To the profane, they were known as "Gib's Deils." Bailie Sweedie, a noted humorist in the town, vowed that the proceedings always opened to the tune of "The Deil Fly Away with the Exciseman," and that the sacrament was dispensed in the form of hot whisky toddy; both wicked hits at the evangelist, who had been suspected of smuggling in his youth, and had been overtaken (as the phrase went) on the streets of Crossmichael one Fair day. It was known that every Sunday they prayed for a blessing on the arms of Bonaparte. For this, "God's Remnant," as they were "skailing" from the cottage that did duty for a temple,



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had been repeatedly stoned by the bairns, and Gib himself hooted by a squadron of Border volunteers in which his own brother, Dand, rode in a uniform and with a drawn sword. The "Remnant" were believed, besides, to be "antinomian in principle," which might otherwise have been a serious charge, but the way public opinion then blew it was quite swallowed up and forgotten in the scandal about Bonaparte. For the rest, Gilbert had set up his loom in an outhouse at Cauldstaneslap, where he laboured assiduously six days of the week. His brothers, appalled by his political opinions and willing to avoid dissension in the household, spoke but little to him; he less to them, remaining absorbed in the study of the Bible and almost constant prayer. The gaunt weaver was dry-nurse at Cauldstaneslap, and the bairns loved him dearly. Except when he was carrying an infant in his arms, he was rarely seen to smile—as, indeed, there were few smilers in that family. When his sister-in-law rallied him, and proposed that he should get a wife and bairns of his own, since he was so fond of them, "I have no clearness of mind upon that point," he would reply. If nobody called him in to dinner, he stayed out. Mrs. Hob, a hard, unsympathetic woman, once tried the experiment. He went without food all day, but at dusk, as the light began to fail him, he came into the house of his own accord, looking puzzled. "I've had a great gale of prayer upon



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my speerit," said he. "I canna mind sae muckle's what I had for denner." The creed of God's Remnant was justified in the life of its founder. "And yet I dinna ken," said Kirstie. "He's maybe no more stockfish than his neeghbours! He rode wi' the rest o' them, and had a good stamach to the work, by a' that I hear! God's Remnant! The deil's clavers! There wasna muckle Christianity in the way Hob guided Johnny Dickieson, at the least of it; but Guid kens! Is he a Christian even? He might be a Mahommedan or a Deevil or a Fire-worshipper, for what I ken."

The third brother had his name on a doorplate, no less, in the city of Glasgow. "Mr. Clement Elliott," as long as your arm. In his case, that spirit of innovation which had shown itself timidly in the case of Hob by the admission of new manures, and which had run to waste with Gilbert in subversive politics and heretical religions, bore useful fruit in many ingenious mechanical improvements. In boyhood, from his addiction to strange devices of sticks and string, he had been counted the most eccentric of the family. But that was all by now, and he was a partner of his firm, and looked to die a bailie. He too had married, and was rearing a plentiful family in the smoke and din of Glasgow; he was wealthy, and could have bought out his brother, the cock-laird, six times over, it was whispered; and when he slipped away to Cauld-

staneslap for a well-earned holiday, which he did as often as he was able, he astonished the neighbours with his broadcloth, his beaver hat, and the ample plies of his neck-cloth. Though an eminently solid man at bottom, after the pattern of Hob, he had contracted a certain Glasgow briskness and *aplomb* which set him off. All the other Elliotts were as lean as a rake, but Clement was laying on fat, and he panted sorely when he must get into his boots. Dand said, chuckling: "Ay, Clem has the elements of a corporation." "A provost and corporation," returned Clem. And his readiness was much admired.

The fourth brother, Dand, was a shepherd to his trade, and by starts, when he could bring his mind to it, excelled in the business. Nobody could train a dog like Dandie; nobody, through the peril of great storms in the winter time, could do more gallantly. But if his dexterity were exquisite, his diligence was but fitful; and he served his brother for bed and board, and a trifle of pocket-money when he asked for it. He loved money well enough, knew very well how to spend it, and could make a shrewd bargain when he liked. But he preferred a vague knowledge that he was well to windward to any counted coins in the pocket; he felt himself richer so. Hob would expostulate: "I'm an amature herd," Dand would reply: "I'll keep your sheep to you when I'm so minded, but I'll keep my liberty, too. Thir's no man can coandescend on what



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I'm worth." Clem would expound to him the miraculous results of compound interest, and recommend investments. "Ay, man?" Dand would say, "and do you think, if I took Hob's siller, that I wouldna drink it or wear it on the lassies? And, anyway, my kingdom is no' of this world. Either I'm a poet or else I'm nothing." Clem would remind him of old age. "I'll die young, like Robbie Burns," he would say stoutly. No question but he had a certain accomplishment in minor verse. His "Hermiston Burn," with its pretty refrain—

> "I love to gang thinking whaur ye gang linking,
> Hermiston burn, in the howe;"

his "Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour, bauld Elliotts of auld," and his really fascinating piece about the Praying Weaver's Stone, had gained him in the neighbourhood the reputation, still possible in Scotland, of a local bard; and, though not printed himself, he was recognised by others who were and who had become famous. Walter Scott owed to Dandie the text of the "Raid of Wearie" in the *Minstrelsy* and made him welcome at his house, and appreciated his talents, such as they were, with all his usual generosity. The Ettrick Shepherd was his sworn crony; they would meet, drink to excess, roar out their lyrics in each other's faces, and quarrel and make it up again till bedtime. And besides these recognitions, almost to be called official,



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Dandie was made welcome for the sake of his gift through the farmhouses of several contiguous dales, and was thus exposed to manifold temptations which he rather sought than fled. He had figured on the stool of repentance, for once fulfilling to the letter the tradition of his hero and model. His humorous verses to Mr. Torrance on that occasion—"Kenspeckle here my lane I stand"—unfortunately too indelicate for further citation, ran through the country like a fiery cross; they were recited, quoted, paraphrased and laughed over as far away as Dumfries on the one hand and Dunbar on the other.

These four brothers were united by a close bond, the bond of that mutual admiration—or rather mutual hero-worship—which is so strong among the members of secluded families who have much ability and little culture. Even the extremes admired each other. Hob, who had as much poetry as the tongs, professed to find pleasure in Dand's verses; Clem, who had no more religion than Claverhouse, nourished a heartfelt, at least an open-mouthed, admiration of Gib's prayers; and Dandie followed with relish the rise of Clem's fortunes. Indulgence followed hard on the heels of admiration. The laird, Clem and Dand, who were Tories and patriots of the hottest quality, excused to themselves, with a certain bashfulness, the radical and revolutionary heresies of Gib. By another division of the family, the laird, Clem, and Gib, who



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were men exactly virtuous, swallowed the dose of Dand's irregularities as a kind of clog or drawback in the mysterious providence of God affixed to bards, and distinctly probative of poetical genius. To appreciate the simplicity of their mutual admiration, it was necessary to hear Clem, arrived upon one of his visits, and dealing in a spirit of continuous irony with the affairs and personalities of that great city of Glasgow where he lived and transacted business. The various personages, ministers of the church, municipal officers, mercantile big-wigs, whom he had occasion to introduce, were all alike denigrated, all served but as reflectors to cast back a flattering side-light on the house of Cauldstaneslap. The Provost, for whom Clem by exception entertained a measure of respect, he would liken to Hob. "He minds me o' the laird there," he would say. "He has some of Hob's grand, whunstane sense, and the same way with him of steiking his mouth when he's no' very pleased." And Hob, all unconscious, would draw down his upper lip and produce, as if for comparison, the formidable grimace referred to. The unsatisfactory incumbent of St. Enoch's Kirk was thus briefly dismissed: "If he had but twa fingers o' Gib's he would waken them up." And Gib, honest man! would look down and secretly smile. Clem was a spy whom they had sent out into the world of men. He had come back with the good news that there was nobody to compare with the Four



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Black Brothers, no position that they would not adorn, no official that it would not be well they should replace, no interest of mankind, secular or spiritual, which would not immediately bloom under their supervision. The excuse of their folly is in two words: scarce the breadth of a hair divided them from the peasantry. The measure of their sense is this: that these symposia of rustic vanity were kept entirely within the family, like some secret ancestral practice. To the world their serious faces were never deformed by the suspicion of any simper of self-contentment. Yet it was known. "They hae a guid pride o' themsel's!" was the word in the countryside.

Lastly, in a Border story, there should be added their "to-names." Hob was The Laird. "Roy ne puis, prince ne daigne"; he was the laird of Cauldstaneslap—say fifty acres—*ipsissimus*. Clement was Mr. Elliott, as upon his door-plate, the earlier Dafty having been discarded as no longer applicable, and indeed only a reminder of misjudgment and the imbecility of the public; and the youngest, in honour of his perpetual wanderings, was known by the sobriquet of Randy Dand.

It will be understood that not all this information was communicated by the aunt, who had too much of the family failing herself to appreciate it thoroughly in others. But as time went on, Archie began to observe an omission in the family chronicle.



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"Is there not a girl too?" he asked.

"Ay. Kirstie. She was named from me, or my grandmother at least—it's the same thing," returned the aunt, and went on again about Dand, whom she secretly preferred by reason of his gallantries.

"But what is your niece like?" said Archie at the next opportunity.

"Her? As black's your hat! But I dinna suppose she would maybe be what you would ca' *ill-looked* a' thegither. Na, she's a kind of a handsome jaud—a kind o' gipsy," said the aunt, who had two sets of scales for men and women —or perhaps it would be more fair to say that she had three, and the third and the most loaded was for girls.

"How comes it that I never see her in church?" said Archie.

"'Deed, and I believe she's in Glesgie with Clem and his wife. A heap good she's like to get of it! I dinna say for men folk, but where weemen folk are born, there let them bide. Glory to God, I was never far'er from here than Crossmichael."

In the meantime it began to strike Archie as strange, that while she thus sang the praises of her kinsfolk, and manifestly relished their virtues and (I may say) their vices like a thing creditable to herself, there should appear not the least sign of cordiality between the house of Hermiston and that of Cauldstaneslap. Going to church



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of a Sunday, as the lady housekeeper stepped with her skirts kilted, three tucks of her white petticoat showing below, and her best India shawl upon her back (if the day were fine) in a pattern of radiant dyes, she would sometimes overtake her relatives preceding her more leisurely in the same direction. Gib of course was absent: by skriegh of day he had been gone to Crossmichael and his fellow heretics; but the rest of the family would be seen marching in open order: Hob and Dand, stiff-necked, straight-backed six-footers, with severe dark faces, and their plaids about their shoulders; the convoy of children scattering (in a state of high polish) on the wayside, and every now and again collected by the shrill summons of the mother; and the mother herself, by a suggestive circumstance which might have afforded matter of thought to a more experienced observer than Archie, wrapped in a shawl nearly identical with Kirstie's but a thought more gaudy and conspicuously newer. At the sight, Kirstie grew more tall—Kirstie showed her classical profile, nose in air and nostril spread, the pure blood came in her cheek evenly in a delicate living pink.

"A braw day to ye, Mistress Elliott," said she, and hostility and gentility were nicely mingled in her tones. "A fine day, mem," the laird's wife would reply with a miraculous curtsey, spreading the while her plumage—setting off, in other words, and with arts unknown to the



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mere man, the pattern of her India shawl. Behind her, the whole Cauldstaneslap contingent marched in closer order, and with an indescribable air of being in the presence of the foe; and while Dandie saluted his aunt with a certain familiarity as of one who was well in court, Hob marched on in awful immobility. There appeared upon the face of this attitude in the family the consequences of some dreadful feud. Presumably the two women had been principals in the original encounter, and the laird had probably been drawn into the quarrel by the ears, too late to be included in the present skin-deep reconciliation.

"Kirstie," said Archie one day, "what is this you have against your family?"

"I dinna complean," said Kirstie, with a flush. "I say naething."

"I see you do not—not even good-day to your own nephew," said he.

"I hae naething to be ashamed of," said she. "I can say the Lord's Prayer with a good grace. If Hob was ill, or in preeson or poverty, I would see to him blithely. But for curtchying and complimenting and colloguing, thank ye kindly!"

Archie had a bit of a smile: he leaned back in his chair. "I think you and Mrs. Robert are not very good friends," says he slyly, "when you have your India shawls on?"

She looked upon him in silence, with a sparkling eye but an indecipherable expression; and

that was all that Archie was ever destined to learn of the battle of the India shawls.

"Do none of them ever come here to see you?" he inquired.

"Mr. Archie," said she, "I hope that I ken my place better. It would be a queer thing, I think, if I was to clamjamfry up your faither's house . . . that I should say it!—wi' a dirty, black-a-vised clan, no ane o' them it was worth while to mar soap upon but just mysel'! Na, they're all damnifeed wi' the black Ellwalds. I have nae patience wi' black folk." Then, with a sudden consciousness of the case of Archie, "No' that it maitters for men sae muckle," she made haste to add, "but there's naebody can deny that it's unwomanly. Long hair is the ornament o' woman ony way; we've good warrandise for that—it's in the Bible—and wha can doubt that the Apostle had some gowden-haired lassie in his mind—Apostle and all, for what was he but just a man like yersel'?"



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## CHAPTER VI

### A LEAF FROM CHRISTINA'S PSALM-BOOK

ARCHIE was sedulous at church. Sunday after Sunday he sat down and stood up with that small company, heard the voice of Mr. Torrance leaping like an ill-played clarionet from key to key, and had an opportunity to study his moth-eaten gown and the black thread mittens that he joined together in prayer, and lifted up with a reverent solemnity in the act of benediction. Hermiston pew was a little square box, dwarfish in proportion with the kirk itself, and enclosing a table not much bigger than a footstool. There sat Archie an apparent prince, the only undeniable gentleman and the only great heritor in the parish, taking his ease in the only pew, for no other in the kirk had doors. Thence he might command an undisturbed view of that congregation of solid plaided men, strapping wives and daughters, oppressed children, and uneasy sheep-dogs. It was strange how Archie missed the look of race; except the dogs, with their refined foxy faces and inimitably curling



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tails, there was no one present with the least claim to gentility. The Cauldstaneslap party was scarcely an exception; Dandie perhaps, as he amused himself making verses through the interminable burden of the service, stood out a little by the glow in his eye and a certain superior animation of face and alertness of body; but even Dandie slouched like a rustic. The rest of the congregation, like so many sheep, oppressed him with a sense of hob-nailed routine, day following day—of physical labour in the open air, oatmeal porridge, peas bannock, the somnolent fire-side in the evening, and the night-long nasal slumbers in a box-bed. Yet he knew many of them to be shrewd and humorous, men of character, notable women, making a bustle in the world and radiating an influence from their low-browed doors. He knew besides they were like other men; below the crust of custom, rapture found a way; he had heard them beat the timbrel before Bacchus—had heard them shout and carouse over their whisky-toddy; and not the most Dutch-bottomed and severe faces among them all, not even the solemn elders themselves, but were capable of singular gambols at the voice of love. Men drawing near to an end of life's adventurous journey—maids thrilling with fear and curiosity on the threshold of entrance—women who had borne and perhaps buried children, who could remember the clinging of the small dead hands and the patter of the little feet now silent—he



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marvelled that among all those faces there should be no face of expectation, none that was mobile, none into which the rhythm and poetry of life had entered. "O for a live face," he thought; and at times he had a memory of Lady Flora; and at times he would study the living gallery before him with despair, and would see himself go on to waste his days in that joyless, pastoral place, and death come to him, and his grave be dug under the rowans, and the Spirit of the Earth laugh out in a thunder-peal at the huge fiasco.

On this particular Sunday, there was no doubt but that the spring had come at last. It was warm, with a latent shiver in the air that made the warmth only the more welcome. The shallows of the stream glittered and tinkled among bunches of primrose. Vagrant scents of the earth arrested Archie by the way with moments of ethereal intoxication. The grey, Quakerish dale was still only awakened in places and patches from the sobriety of its wintry colouring; and he wondered at its beauty; an essential beauty of the old earth it seemed to him, not resident in particulars but breathing to him from the whole. He surprised himself by a sudden impulse to write poetry—he did so sometimes, loose, galloping octosyllabics in the vein of Scott—and when he had taken his place on a boulder, near some fairy falls and shaded by a whip of a tree that was already radiant with new leaves, it still more surprised him that he should find nothing to

write. His heart perhaps beat in time to some vast indwelling rhythm of the universe. By the time he came to a corner of the valley and could see the kirk, he had so lingered by the way that the first psalm was finishing. The nasal psalmody, full of turns and trills and graceless graces, seemed the essential voice of the kirk itself upraised in thanksgiving. "Everything's alive," he said; and again cries it aloud, "Thank God, everything's alive!" He lingered yet a while in the kirk-yard. A tuft of primroses was blooming hard by the leg of an old, black table tombstone, and he stopped to contemplate the random apologue. They stood forth on the cold earth with a trenchancy of contrast; and he was struck with a sense of incompleteness in the day, the season, and the beauty that surrounded him—the chill there was in the warmth, the gross black clods about the opening primroses, the damp earthy smell that was everywhere intermingled with the scents. The voice of the aged Torrance within rose in an ecstasy. And he wondered if Torrance also felt in his old bones the joyous influence of the spring morning; Torrance, or the shadow of what once was Torrance, that must come so soon to lie outside here in the sun and rain with all his rheumatisms, while a new minister stood in his room and thundered from his own familiar pulpit? The pity of it, and something of the chill of the grave, shook him for a moment as he made haste to enter.



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He went up the aisle reverently and took his place in the pew with lowered eyes, for he feared he had already offended the kind old gentleman in the pulpit, and was sedulous to offend no further. He could not follow the prayer, not even the heads of it. Brightness of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds, rose like exhalations from some deeper, aboriginal memory, that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His body remembered; and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and perishable like a strain of music; and he felt for it an exquisite tenderness as for a child, an innocent, full of beautiful instincts and destined to an early death. And he felt for old Torrance—of the many supplications, of the few days—a pity that was near to tears. The prayer ended. Right over him was a tablet in the wall, the only ornament in the roughly masoned chapel—for it was no more; the tablet commemorated, I was about to say the virtues, but rather the existence of a former Rutherford of Hermiston; and Archie, under that trophy of his long descent and local greatness, leaned back in the pew and contemplated vacancy with the shadow of a smile between playful and sad, that became him strangely. Dandie's sister, sitting by the side of Clem in her new Glasgow finery, chose that moment to observe the young laird. Aware of the stir of his entrance, the little formalist had kept her



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eyes fastened and her face prettily composed during the prayer. It was not hypocrisy, there was no one further from a hypocrite. The girl had been taught to behave: to look up, to look down, to look unconscious, to look seriously impressed in church, and in every conjuncture to look her best. That was the game of female life, and she played it frankly. Archie was the one person in church who was of interest, who was somebody new, reputed eccentric, known to be young, and a laird, and still unseen by Christina. Small wonder that, as she stood there in her attitude of pretty decency, her mind should run upon him! If he spared a glance in her direction, he should know she was a well-behaved young lady who had been to Glasgow. In reason he must admire her clothes, and it was possible that he should think her pretty. At that her heart beat the least thing in the world; and she proceeded, by way of a corrective, to call up and dismiss a series of fancied pictures of the young man who should now, by rights, be looking at her. She settled on the plainest of them, a pink short young man with a dish face and no figure, at whose admiration she could afford to smile; but for all that, the consciousness of his gaze (which was really fixed on Torrance and his mittens) kept her in something of a flutter till the word Amen. Even then, she was far too well-bred to gratify her curiosity with any impatience. She resumed her seat languidly—this



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was a Glasgow touch—she composed her dress, rearranged her nosegay of primroses, looked first in front, then behind upon the other side, and at last allowed her eyes to move, without hurry, in the direction of the Hermiston pew. For a moment, they were riveted. Next she had plucked her gaze home again like a tame bird who should have meditated flight. Possibilities crowded on her; she hung over the future and grew dizzy; the image of this young man, slim, graceful, dark, with the inscrutable half-smile, attracted and repelled her like a chasm. "I wonder, will I have met my fate?" she thought, and her heart swelled.

Torrance was got some way into his first exposition, positing a deep layer of texts as he went along, laying the foundations of his discourse, which was to deal with a nice point in divinity, before Archie suffered his eyes to wander. They fell first of all on Clem, looking insupportably prosperous and patronising Torrance with the favour of a modified attention, as of one who was used to better things in Glasgow. Though he had never before set eyes on him, Archie had no difficulty in identifying him, and no hesitation in pronouncing him vulgar, the worst of the family. Clem was leaning lazily forward when Archie first saw him. Presently he leaned nonchalantly back; and that deadly instrument, the maiden, was suddenly unmasked in profile. Though not quite in the front of the fashion (had



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anybody cared!), certain artful Glasgow mantua-makers, and her own inherent taste, had arrayed her to great advantage. Her accoutrement was, indeed, a cause of heart-burning, and almost of scandal, in that infinitesimal kirk company. Mrs. Hob had said her say at Cauldstaneslap. "Daft-like!" she had pronounced it. "A jaiket that'll no' meet! Whaur's the sense of a jaiket that'll no' button upon ye, if it should come to be weet? What do ye ca' thir things? Demmy brokens, d'ye say? They'll be brokens wi' a vengeance or ye can win back! Weel, I have naething to do wi' it—it's no' good taste." Clem, whose purse had thus metamorphosed his sister, and who was not insensible to the advertisement, had come to the rescue with a "Hoot, woman! What do you ken of good taste that has never been to the ceety?" And Hob, looking on the girl with pleased smiles, as she timidly displayed her finery in the midst of the dark kitchen, had thus ended the dispute: "The cutty looks weel," he had said, "and it's no' very like rain. Wear them the day, hizzie; but it's no' a thing to make a practice o'." In the breasts of her rivals, coming to the kirk very conscious of white under-linen, and their faces splendid with much soap, the sight of the toilet had raised a storm of varying emotion, from the mere unenvious admiration that was expressed in the long-drawn "Eh!" to the angrier feeling that found vent in an emphatic "Set her up!" Her frock was of



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straw-coloured jaconet muslin, cut low at the bosom and short at the ankle, so as to display her *demi-broquins* of Regency violet, crossing with many straps upon a yellow cobweb stocking. According to the pretty fashion in which our grandmothers did not hesitate to appear, and our great-aunts went forth armed for the pursuit and capture of our great-uncles, the dress was drawn up so as to mould the contour of both breasts, and in the nook between a cairngorm brooch maintained it. Here, too, surely in a very enviable position, trembled the nosegay of primroses. She wore on her shoulders—or rather, on her back and not her shoulders, which it scarcely passed—a French coat of sarsenet, tied in front with Margate braces, and of the same colour with her violet shoes. About her face clustered a disorder of dark ringlets, a little garland of yellow French roses surmounted her brow, and the whole was crowned by a village hat of chipped straw. Amongst all the rosy and all the weathered faces that surrounded her in church, she glowed like an open flower—girl and raiment, and the cairngorm that caught the daylight and returned it in a fiery flash, and the threads of bronze and gold that played in her hair.

Archie was attracted by the bright thing like a child. He looked at her again and yet again, and their looks crossed. The lip was lifted from her little teeth. He saw the red blood work



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vividly under her tawny skin. Her eye, which was great as a stag's, struck and held his gaze. He knew who she must be—Kirstie, she of the harsh diminutive, his housekeeper's niece, the sister of the rustic prophet, Gib—and he found in her the answer to his wishes.

Christina felt the shock of their encountering glances, and seemed to rise, clothed in smiles, into a region of the vague and bright. But the gratification was not more exquisite than it was brief. She looked away abruptly, and immediately began to blame herself for that abruptness. She knew what she should have done, too late—turned slowly with her nose in the air. And meantime his look was not removed, but continued to play upon her like a battery of cannon constantly aimed, and now seemed to isolate her alone with him, and now seemed to uplift her, as on a pillory, before the congregation. For Archie continued to drink her in with his eyes, even as a wayfarer comes to a well-head on a mountain, and stoops his face, and drinks with thirst unassuageable. In the cleft of her little breasts the fiery eye of the topaz and the pale florets of primrose fascinated him. He saw the breasts heave, and the flowers shake with the heaving, and marvelled what should so much discompose the girl. And Christina was conscious of his gaze—saw it, perhaps, with the dainty plaything of an ear that peeped among her ringlets; she was conscious of changing



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colour, conscious of her unsteady breath. Like a creature tracked, run down, surrounded, she sought in a dozen ways to give herself a countenance. She used her handkerchief—it was a really fine one—then she desisted in a panic: "He would only think I was too warm." She took to reading in the metrical psalms, and then remembered it was sermon-time. Last she put a "sugar-bool" in her mouth, and the next moment repented of the step. It was such a homely-like thing! Mr. Archie would never be eating sweeties in kirk; and, with a palpable effort, she swallowed it whole, and her colour flamed high. At this signal of distress Archie awoke to a sense of his ill-behaviour. What had he been doing? He had been exquisitely rude in church to the niece of his housekeeper; he had stared like a lackey and a libertine at a beautiful and modest girl. It was possible, it was even likely, he would be presented to her after service in the kirk-yard, and then how was he to look? And there was no excuse. He had marked the tokens of her shame, of her increasing indignation, and he was such a fool that he had not understood them. Shame bowed him down, and he looked resolutely at Mr. Torrance; who little supposed, good, worthy man, as he continued to expound justification by faith, what was his true business: to play the part of derivative to a pair of children at the old game of falling in love.

Christina was greatly relieved at first. It



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seemed to her that she was clothed again. She looked back on what had passed. All would have been right if she had not blushed, a silly fool! There was nothing to blush at, if she *had* taken a sugar-bool. Mrs. MacTaggart, the elder's wife in St. Enoch's, took them often. And if he had looked at her, what was more natural than that a young gentleman should look at the best-dressed girl in church? And at the same time, she knew far otherwise; she knew there was nothing casual or ordinary in the look, and valued herself on its memory like a decoration. Well, it was a blessing he had found something else to look at! And presently she began to have other thoughts. It was necessary, she fancied, that she should put herself right by a repetition of the incident, better managed. If the wish was father to the thought, she did not know or she would not recognise it. It was simply as a manœuvre of propriety, as something called for to lessen the significance of what had gone before, that she should a second time meet his eyes, and this time without blushing. And at the memory of the blush, she blushed again, and became one general blush burning from head to foot. Was ever anything so indelicate, so forward, done by a girl before? And here she was, making an exhibition of herself before the congregation about nothing! She stole a glance upon her neighbours, and behold! they were steadily indifferent, and Clem had gone



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to sleep. And still the one idea was becoming more and more potent with her, that in common prudence she must look again before the service ended. Something of the same sort was going forward in the mind of Archie, as he struggled with the load of penitence. So it chanced that, in the flutter of the moment when the last psalm was given out, and Torrance was reading the verse, and the leaves of every psalm-book in church were rustling under busy fingers, two stealthy glances were sent out like antennæ among the pews and on the indifferent and absorbed occupants, and drew timidly nearer to the straight line between Archie and Christina. They met, they lingered together for the least fraction of time, and that was enough. A charge as of electricity passed through Christina, and behold! the leaf of her psalm-book was torn across.

Archie was outside by the gate of the graveyard, conversing with Hob and the minister and shaking hands all round with the scattering congregation, when Clem and Christina were brought up to be presented. The laird took off his hat and bowed to her with grace and respect. Christina made her Glasgow curtsey to the laird, and went on again up the road for Hermiston and Cauldstaneslap, walking fast, breathing hurriedly with a heightened colour, and in this strange frame of mind, that when she was alone she seemed in high happiness, and when



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any one addressed her she resented it like a contradiction. A part of the way she had the company of some neighbour girls and a loutish young man; never had they seemed so insipid, never had she made herself so disagreeable. But these struck aside to their various destinations or were out-walked and left behind; and when she had driven off with sharp words the proffered convoy of some of her nephews and nieces, she was free to go on alone up Hermiston brae, walking on air, dwelling intoxicated among clouds of happiness. Near to the summit she heard steps behind her, a man's steps, light and very rapid. She knew the foot at once and walked the faster. "If it's me he's wanting he can run for it," she thought, smiling.

Archie overtook her like a man whose mind was made up.

"Miss Kirstie," he began.

"Miss Christina, if you please, Mr. Weir," she interrupted. "I canna bear the contraction."

"You forget it has a friendly sound for me. Your aunt is an old friend of mine and a very good one. I hope we shall see much of you at Hermiston?"

"My aunt and my sister-in-law doesna agree very well. Not that I have much ado with it. But still when I'm stopping in the house, if I was to be visiting my aunt, it would not look considerate-like."

"I am sorry," said Archie.



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"I thank you kindly, Mr. Weir," she said. "I whiles think myself it's a great peety."

"Ah, I am sure your voice would always be for peace!" he cried.

"I wouldna be too sure of that," she said. "I have my days like other folk, I suppose."

"Do you know, in our old kirk, among our good old grey dames, you made an effect like sunshine."

"Ah, but that would be my Glasgow clothes!"

"I did not think I was so much under the influence of pretty frocks."

She smiled with a half look at him. "There's more than you!" she said. "But you see I'm only Cinderella. I'll have to put all these things by in my trunk; next Sunday I'll be as grey as the rest. They're Glasgow clothes, you see, and it would never dò to make a practice of it. It would seem terrible conspicuous."

By that they were come to the place where their ways severed. The old grey moors were all about them; in the midst a few sheep wandered; and they could see on the one hand the straggling caravan scaling the braes in front of them for Cauldstaneslap, and on the other the contingent from Hermiston bending off and beginning to disappear by detachments into the policy gate. It was in these circumstances that they turned to say farewell, and deliberately exchanged a glance as they shook hands. All passed as it should, genteelly; and in Christina's



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mind, as she mounted the first steep ascent for Cauldstaneslap, a gratifying sense of triumph prevailed over the recollection of minor lapses and mistakes. She had kilted her gown, as she did usually at that rugged pass; but when she spied Archie still standing and gazing after her, the skirts came down again as if by enchantment. Here was a piece of nicety for that upland parish, where the matrons marched with their coats kilted in the rain, and the lasses walked barefoot to kirk through the dust of summer, and went bravely down by the burnside, and sat on stones to make a public toilet before entering! It was perhaps an air wafted from Glasgow; or perhaps it marked a stage of that dizziness of gratified vanity, in which the instinctive act passed unperceived. He was looking after! She unloaded her bosom of a prodigious sigh that was all pleasure, and betook herself to run. When she had overtaken the stragglers of her family, she caught up the niece whom she had so recently repulsed, and kissed and slapped her, and drove her away again, and ran after her with pretty cries and laughter. Perhaps she thought the laird might still be looking! But it chanced the little scene came under the view of eyes less favourable; for she overtook Mrs. Hob marching with Clem and Dand.

"You're shürely fey,[1] lass!" quoth Dandie.

[1] Unlike yourself, strange, as persons are observed to be in the hour of approaching death or calamity.



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"Think shame to yersel', miss!" said the strident Mrs. Hob. "Is this the gait to guide yersel' on the way hame frae kirk? You're shürely no' sponsible the day. And anyway I would mind my guid claes."

"Hoot!" said Christina, and went on before them, head in air, treading the rough track with the tread of a wild doe.

She was in love with herself, her destiny, the air of the hills, the benedictions of the sun. All the way home, she continued under the intoxication of these sky-scraping spirits. At table she could talk freely of young Hermiston; gave her opinion of him offhand and with a loud voice, that he was a handsome young gentleman, real well-mannered and sensible-like, but it was a pity he looked doleful. Only—the moment after—a memory of his eyes in church embarrassed her. But for this inconsiderable check, all through meal-time she had a good appetite, and she kept them laughing at table, until Gib (who had returned before them from Crossmichael and his separative worship) reproved the whole of them for their levity.

Singing "in to herself" as she went, her mind still in the turmoil of glad confusion, she rose and tripped up-stairs to a little loft, lighted by four panes in the gable, where she slept with one of her nieces. The niece, who followed her, presuming on "Auntie's" high spirits, was flounced out of the apartment with small cere-

mony, and retired, smarting and half-tearful, to bury her woes in the byre among the hay. Still humming, Christina divested herself of her finery, and put her treasures one by one in her great green trunk. The last of these was the psalm-book; it was a fine piece, the gift of Mistress Clem, in distinct old-faced type, on paper that had begun to grow foxy in the warehouse—not by service—and she was used to wrap it in a handkerchief every Sunday after its period of service was over, and bury it end-wise at the head of her trunk. As she now took it in hand the book fell open where the leaf was torn, and she stood and gazed upon that evidence of her by-gone discomposure. There returned again the vision of the two brown eyes staring at her, intent and bright, out of that dark corner of the kirk. The whole appearance and attitude, the smile, the suggested gesture of young Hermiston came before her in a flash at the sight of the torn page. "I was surely fey!" she said, echoing the words of Dandie, and at the suggested doom her high spirits deserted her. She flung herself prone upon the bed, and lay there, holding the psalm-book in her hands for hours, for the more part in a mere stupor of unconsenting pleasure and unreasoning fear. The fear was superstitious; there came up again and again in her memory Dandie's ill-omened words, and a hundred grisly and black tales out of the immediate neighbourhood read her a commentary on their



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force. The pleasure was never realised. You might say the joints of her body thought and remembered, and were gladdened, but her essential self, in the immediate theatre of consciousness, talked feverishly of something else, like a nervous person at a fire. The image that she most complacently dwelt on was that of Miss Christina in her character of the Fair Lass of Cauldstaneslap, carrying all before her in the straw-coloured frock, the violet mantle, and the yellow cobweb stockings. Archie's image, on the other hand, when it presented itself, was never welcomed—far less welcomed with any ardour, and it was exposed at times to merciless criticism. In the long, vague dialogues she held in her mind, often with imaginary, often with unrealised interlocutors, Archie, if he were referred to at all, came in for savage handling. He was described as "looking like a stork," "staring like a caulf," "a face like a ghaist's." "Do you call that manners?" she said; or, "I soon put him in his place." "'*Miss Christina, if you please, Mr. Weir!*' says I, and just flyped up my skirt tails." With gabble like this she would entertain herself long whiles together, and then her eye would perhaps fall on the torn leaf, and the eyes of Archie would appear again from the darkness of the wall, and the voluble words deserted her, and she would lie still and stupid, and think upon nothing with devotion, and be sometimes raised by a quiet sigh. Had a doctor



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of medicine come into that loft, he would have diagnosed a healthy, well-developed, eminently vivacious lass lying on her face in a fit of the sulks; not one who had just contracted, or was just contracting, a mortal sickness of the mind which should yet carry her towards death and despair. Had it been a doctor of psychology, he might have been pardoned for divining in the girl a passion of childish vanity, self-love *in excelsis*, and no more. It is to be understood that I have been painting chaos and describing the inarticulate. Every lineament that appears is too precise, almost every word used too strong. Take a finger-post in the mountains on a day of rolling mists; I have but copied the names that appear upon the pointers, the names of definite and famous cities far distant, and now perhaps basking in sunshine; but Christina remained all these hours, as it were, at the foot of the post itself, not moving, and enveloped in mutable and blinding wreaths of haze.

The day was growing late and the sunbeams long and level, when she sat suddenly up, and wrapped in its handkerchief and put by that psalm-book which had already played a part so decisive in the first chapter of her love-story. In the absence of the mesmerist's eye, we are told nowadays that the head of a bright nail may fill his place, if it be steadfastly regarded. So that torn page had riveted her attention on what might else have been but little, and perhaps



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soon forgotten; while the ominous words of Dandie—heard, not heeded, and still remembered—had lent to her thoughts, or rather to her mood, a cast of solemnity, and that idea of Fate—a pagan Fate, uncontrolled by any Christian deity, obscure, lawless, and august—moving indissuadably in the affairs of Christian men. Thus even that phenomenon of love at first sight, which is so rare and seems so simple and violent, like a disruption of life's tissue, may be decomposed into a sequence of accidents happily concurring.

She put on a grey frock and a pink kerchief, looked at herself a moment with approval in the small square of glass that served her for a toilet mirror, and went softly down-stairs through the sleeping house that resounded with the sound of afternoon snoring. Just outside the door Dandie was sitting with a book in his hand, not reading, only honouring the Sabbath by a sacred vacancy of mind. She came near him and stood still.

"I'm for off up the muirs, Dandie," she said.

There was something unusually soft in her tones that made him look up. She was pale, her eyes dark and bright; no trace remained of the levity of the morning.

"Ay, lass? Ye'll have yer ups and downs like me, I'm thinkin'," he observed.

"What for do ye say that?" she asked.

"O, for naething," says Dand. "Only I think ye're mair like me than the lave of them. Ye've



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mair of the poetic temper, tho' Guid kens little enough of the poetic taalent. It's an ill gift at the best. Look at yoursel'. At denner you were all sunshine and flowers and laughter, and now you're like the star of evening on a lake."

She drank in this hackneyed compliment like wine, and it glowed in her veins.

"But I'm saying, Dand"—she came nearer him—"I'm for the muirs. I must have a braith of air. If Clem was to be speiring for me, try and quaiet him, will ye no'?"

"What way?" said Dandie. "I ken but the ae way, and that's leein'. I'll say ye had a sair heed, if ye like."

"But I havena," she objected.

"I daursay not," he returned. "I said I would say ye had; and if ye like to nay-say me when ye come back, it'll no mateerially maitter, for my chara'ter's clean gane a'ready past reca'."

"O, Dand, are ye a leear?" she asked, lingering.

"Folks say sae," replied the bard.

"Wha says sae?" she pursued.

"Them that should ken the best," he responded. "The lassies, for ane."

"But, Dand, you would never lee to me?" she asked.

"I'll leave that for your pairt of it, ye girzie," said he. "Ye'll lee to me fast eneuch, when ye hae gotten a jo. I'm tellin' ye and it's true; when you have a jo, Miss Kirstie, it'll be for



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guid and ill. I ken: I was made that way mysel', but the deil was in my luck! Here, gang awa wi' ye to your muirs, and let me be; I'm in an hour of inspiraution, ye upsetting tawpie!"

But she clung to her brother's neighbourhood, she knew not why.

"Will ye no gie's a kiss, Dand?" she said. "I aye likit ye fine."

He kissed her and considered her a moment; he found something strange in her. But he was a libertine through and through, nourished equal contempt and suspicion of all womankind, and paid his way among them habitually with idle compliments.

"Gae wa' wi' ye!" said he. "Ye're a dentie baby, and be content wi' that!"

That was Dandie's way; a kiss and a comfit to Jenny—a bawbee and my blessing to Jill—and good-night to the whole clan of ye, my dears! When anything approached the serious, it became a matter for men, he both thought and said. Women, when they did not absorb, were only children to be shoo'd away. Merely in his character of connoisseur, however, Dandie glanced carelessly after his sister as she crossed the meadow. "The brat's no' that bad!" he thought with surprise, for though he had just been paying her compliments, he had not really looked at her. "Hey! what's yon?" For the grey dress was cut with short sleeves and skirts, and displayed her trim strong legs clad in pink stockings of the

same shade as the kerchief she wore round her shoulders, and that shimmered as she went. This was not her way in undress; he knew her ways and the ways of the whole sex in the country-side, no one better; when they did not go barefoot, they wore stout "rig and furrow" woollen hose of an invisible blue mostly, when they were not black outright; and Dandie, at sight of this daintiness, put two and two together. It was a silk handkerchief, then they would be silken hose; they matched—then the whole outfit was a present of Clem's, a costly present, and not something to be worn through bog and briar, or on a late afternoon of Sunday. He whistled. "My denty May, either your heid's fair turned, or there's some on-goings!" he observed, and dismissed the subject.

She went slowly at first, but ever straighter and faster for the Cauldstaneslap, a pass among the hills to which the farm owed its name. The Slap opened like a doorway between two rounded hillocks; and through this ran the short cut to Hermiston. Immediately on the other side it went down through the Deil's Hags, a considerable marshy hollow of the hill-tops, full of springs, and crouching junipers, and pools where the black peat-water slumbered. There was no view from here. A man might have sat upon the Praying Weaver's Stone a half-century, and seen none but the Cauldstaneslap children twice in the twenty-four hours on their way to the



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school and back again, an occasional shepherd, the irruption of a clan of sheep, or the birds who haunted about the springs, drinking and shrilly piping. So, when she had once passed the Slap, Kirstie was received into seclusion. She looked back a last time at the farm. It still lay deserted except for the figure of Dandie, who was now seen to be scribbling in his lap, the hour of expected inspiration having come to him at last. Thence she passed rapidly through the morass, and came to the farther end of it, where a sluggish burn discharges, and the path for Hermiston accompanies it on the beginning of its downward path. From this corner a wide view was opened to her of the whole stretch of braes upon the other side, still sallow and in places rusty with the winter, with the path marked boldly, here and there by the burnside a tuft of birches, and—three miles off as the crow flies—from its enclosures and young plantations, the windows of Hermiston glittering in the western sun.

Here she sat down and waited, and looked for a long time at these far-away bright panes of glass. It amused her to have so extended a view, she thought. It amused her to see the house of Hermiston—to see "folk"; and there was an indistinguishable human unit, perhaps the gardener, visibly sauntering on the gravel paths.

By the time the sun was down and all the easterly braes lay plunged in clear shadow, she



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was aware of another figure coming up the path at a most unequal rate of approach, now half-running, now pausing and seeming to hesitate. She watched him at first with a total suspension of thought. She held her thought as a person holds his breathing. Then she consented to recognise him. "He'll no' be coming here, he canna be; it's no' possible." And there began to grow upon her a subdued choking suspense. He *was* coming; his hesitations had quite ceased, his step grew firm and swift; no doubt remained; and the question loomed up before her instant: what was she to do? It was all very well to say that her brother was a laird himself; it was all very well to speak of casual intermarriages and to count cousinship, like Aunt Kirstie. The difference in their social station was trenchant; propriety, prudence, all that she had ever learned, all that she knew, bade her flee. But on the other hand the cup of life now offered to her was too enchanting. For one moment, she saw the question clearly, and definitely made her choice. She stood up and showed herself an instant in the gap relieved upon the sky line; and the next, fled trembling and sat down glowing with excitement on the Weaver's Stone. She shut her eyes, seeking, praying for composure. Her hand shook in her lap, and her mind was full of incongruous and futile speeches. What was there to make a work about? She could take care of herself, she supposed! There was no harm in



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seeing the laird. It was the best thing that could happen. She would mark a proper distance to him once and for all. Gradually the wheels of her nature ceased to go round so madly, and she sat in passive expectation, a quiet, solitary figure in the midst of the grey moss. I have said she was no hypocrite, but here I am at fault. She never admitted to herself that she had come up the hill to look for Archie. And perhaps after all she did not know, perhaps came as a stone falls. For the steps of love in the young, and especially in girls, are instinctive and unconscious.

In the meantime, Archie was drawing rapidly near, and he at least was consciously seeking her neighbourhood. The afternoon had turned to ashes in his mouth; the memory of the girl had kept him from reading and drawn him as with cords; and at last, as the cool of the evening began to come on, he had taken his hat and set forth, with a smothered ejaculation, by the moor path to Cauldstaneslap. He had no hope to find her; he took the off chance without expectation of result and to relieve his uneasiness. The greater was his surprise, as he surmounted the slope and came into the hollow of the Deil's Hags, to see there, like an answer to his wishes, the little womanly figure in the grey dress and the pink kerchief sitting little, and low, and lost, and acutely solitary, in these desolate surroundings and on the weather-beaten stone of the



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dead weaver. Those things that still smacked of winter were all rusty about her, and those things that already relished of the spring had put forth the tender and lively colours of the season. Even in the unchanging face of the death-stone changes were to be remarked; and in the channelled lettering, the moss began to renew itself in jewels of green. By an after-thought that was a stroke of art, she had turned up over her head the back of the kerchief; so that it now framed becomingly her vivacious and yet pensive face. Her feet were gathered under her on the one side, and she leaned on her bare arm, which showed out strong and round, tapered to a slim wrist, and shimmered in the fading light.

Young Hermiston was struck with a certain chill. He was reminded that he now dealt in serious matters of life and death. This was a grown woman he was approaching, endowed with her mysterious potencies and attractions, the treasury of the continued race, and he was neither better nor worse than the average of his sex and age. He had a certain delicacy which had preserved him hitherto unspotted, and which (had either of them guessed it) made him a more dangerous companion when his heart should be really stirred. His throat was dry as he came near; but the appealing sweetness of her smile stood between them like a guardian angel.

For she turned to him and smiled, though



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without rising. There was a shade in this cavalier greeting that neither of them perceived; neither he, who simply thought it gracious and charming as herself; nor yet she, who did not observe (quick as she was) the difference between rising to meet the laird and remaining seated to receive the expected admirer.

"Are ye stepping west, Hermiston?" said she, giving him his territorial name after the fashion of the country-side.

"I was," said he, a little hoarsely, "but I think I will be about the end of my stroll now. Are you like me, Miss Christina? the house would not hold me. I came here seeking air."

He took his seat at the other end of the tombstone and studied her, wondering what was she. There was infinite import in the question alike for her and him.

"Ay," she said. "I couldna bear the roof either. It's a habit of mine to come up here about the gloaming when it's quaiet and caller."

"It was a habit of my mother's also," he said gravely. The recollection half startled him as he expressed it. He looked around. "I have scarce been here since. It's peaceful," he said, with a long breath.

"It's no' like Glasgow," she replied. "A weary place, yon Glasgow! But what a day have I had for my hame-coming, and what a bonny evening!"

"Indeed, it was a wonderful day," said Ar-



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chie. "I think I will remember it years and years until I come to die. On days like this—I do not know if you feel as I do—but everything appears so brief, and fragile, and exquisite, that I am afraid to touch life. We are here for so short a time; and all the old people before us—Rutherfords of Hermiston, Elliotts of the Cauldstaneslap—that were here but a while since, riding about and keeping up a great noise in this quiet corner—making love too, and marrying—why, where are they now? It's deadly commonplace, but after all, the commonplaces are the great poetic truths."

He was sounding her, semi-consciously, to see if she could understand him; to learn if she were only an animal the colour of flowers, or had a soul in her to keep her sweet. She, on her part, her means well in hand, watched, womanlike, for any opportunity to shine, to abound in his humour, whatever that might be. The dramatic artist, that lies dormant or only half-awake in most human beings, had in her sprung to his feet in a divine fury, and chance had served her well. She looked upon him with a subdued twilight look that became the hour of the day and the train of thought; earnestness shone through her like stars in the purple west; and from the great but controlled upheaval of her whole nature there passed into her voice, and rang in her lightest words, a thrill of emotion.



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"Have you mind of Dand's song?" she answered. "I think ye'll have been trying to say what you have been thinking."

"No, I never heard it," he said. "Repeat it to me, can you?"

"It's nothing wanting the tune," said Kirstie.

"Then sing it me," said he.

"On the Lord's Day? That would never do, Mr. Weir!"

"I am afraid I am not so strict a keeper of the Sabbath, and there is no one in this place to hear us, unless the poor old ancient under the stone."

"No' that I'm thinking that really," she said. "By my way of thinking, it's just as serious as a psalm. Will I sooth it to ye, then?"

"If you please," said he, and, drawing near to her on the tombstone, prepared to listen.

She sat up as if to sing. "I'll only can sooth it to ye," she explained. "I wouldna like to sing out loud on the Sabbath. I think the birds would carry news of it to Gilbert," and she smiled. "It's about the Elliotts," she continued, "and I think there's few bonnier bits in the book-poets, though Dand has never got printed yet."

And she began, in the low, clear tones of her half-voice, now sinking almost to a whisper, now rising to a particular note which was her best, and which Archie learned to wait for with growing emotion:—

"O they rade in the rain, in the days that are gane,
In the rain and the wind and the lave,
They shoutit in the ha' and they routit on the hill,
But they're a' quaitit noo in the grave.
Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour, bauld Elliotts of auld!"

All the time she sang she looked steadfastly before her, her knees straight, her hands upon her knee, her head cast back and up. The expression was admirable throughout, for had she not learned it from the lips and under the criticism of the author? When it was done, she turned upon Archie a face softly bright, and eyes gently suffused and shining in the twilight, and his heart rose and went out to her with boundless pity and sympathy. His question was answered. She was a human being tuned to a sense of the tragedy of life; there were pathos and music and a great heart in the girl.

He arose instinctively, she also, for she saw she had gained a point, and scored the impression deeper, and she had wit enough left to flee upon a victory. They were but commonplaces that remained to be exchanged, but the low, moved voices in which they passed made them sacred in the memory. In the falling greyness of the evening he watched her figure winding through the morass, saw it turn a last time and wave a hand, and then pass through the Slap; and it seemed to him as if something went along with her out of the deepest of his heart. And some-



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thing surely had come, and come to dwell there. He had retained from childhood a picture, now half-obliterated by the passage of time and the multitude of fresh impressions, of his mother telling him, with the fluttered earnestness of her voice, and often with dropping tears, the tale of the "Praying Weaver," on the very scene of his brief tragedy and long repose. And now there was a companion piece; and he beheld, and he should behold for ever, Christina perched on the same tomb, in the grey colours of the evening, gracious, dainty, perfect as a flower, and she also singing—

> "Of old, unhappy far-off things,
> And battles long ago,"

—of their common ancestors now dead, of their rude wars composed, their weapons buried with them, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their places, and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others at the gloaming hour. By one of the unconscious arts of tenderness the two women were enshrined together in his memory. Tears, in that hour of sensibility, came into his eyes indifferently at the thought of either, and the girl, from being something merely bright and shapely, was caught up into the zone of things serious as life and death and his dead mother. So that in all ways and on either side, Fate



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played his game artfully with this poor pair of children. The generations were prepared, the pangs were made ready, before the curtain rose on the dark drama.

In the same moment of time that she disappeared from Archie, there opened before Kirstie's eyes the cup-like hollow in which the farm lay. She saw, some five hundred feet below her, the house making itself bright with candles, and this was a broad hint to her to hurry. For they were only kindled on a Sabbath night with a view to that family worship which rounded in the incomparable tedium of the day and brought on the relaxation of supper. Already she knew that Robert must be within-sides at the head of the table, "waling the portions"; for it was Robert in his quality of family priest and judge, not the gifted Gilbert, who officiated. She made good time accordingly down the steep ascent, and came up to the door panting as the three younger brothers, all roused at last from slumber, stood together in the cool and the dark of the evening with a fry of nephews and nieces about them, chatting and awaiting the expected signal. She stood back; she had no mind to direct attention to her late arrival or to her labouring breath.

"Kirstie, ye have shaved it this time, my lass," said Clem. "Whaur were ye?"

"O, just taking a dander by mysel'," said Kirstie.



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And the talk continued on the subject of the American war, without further reference to the truant who stood by them in the covert of the dusk, thrilling with happiness and the sense of guilt.

The signal was given, and the brothers began to go in one after another, amid the jostle and throng of Hob's children.

Only Dandie, waiting till the last, caught Kirstie by the arm. "When did ye begin to dander in pink hosen, Mistress Elliott?" he whispered slyly.

She looked down; she was one blush. "I maun have forgotten to change them," said she; and went in to prayers in her turn with a troubled mind, between anxiety as to whether Dand should have observed her yellow stockings at church, and should thus detect her in a palpable falsehood, and shame that she had already made good his prophecy.

She remembered the words of it, how it was to be when she had gotten a jo, and that that would be for good and evil. "Will I have gotten my jo now?" she thought with a secret rapture.

And all through prayers, where it was her principal business to conceal the pink stockings from the eyes of the indifferent Mrs. Hob—and all through supper, as she made a feint of eating, and sat at the table radiant and constrained—and again when she had left them and come into her chamber, and was alone with her sleeping

niece, and could at last lay aside the armour of society—the same words sounded within her, the same profound note of happiness, of a world all changed and renewed, of a day that had been passed in Paradise, and of a night that was to be heaven opened. All night she seemed to be conveyed smoothly upon a shallow stream of sleep and waking, and through the bowers of Beulah; all night she cherished to her heart that exquisite hope; and if, towards morning, she forgot it a while in a more profound unconsciousness, it was to catch again the rainbow thought with her first moment of awaking.



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## CHAPTER VII

### ENTER MEPHISTOPHELES

TWO days later a gig from Crossmichael deposited Frank Innes at the doors of Hermiston. Once in a way, during the past winter, Archie, in some acute phase of boredom, had written him a letter. It had contained something in the nature of an invitation, or a reference to an invitation—precisely what, neither of them now remembered. When Innes had received it, there had been nothing further from his mind than to bury himself in the moors with Archie; but not even the most acute political heads are guided through the steps of life with unerring directness. That would require a gift of prophecy which has been denied to man. For instance, who could have imagined that, not a month after he had received the letter, and turned it into mockery, and put off answering it, and in the end lost it, misfortunes of a gloomy cast should begin to thicken over Frank's career? His case may be briefly stated. His father, a small Morayshire laird with a large family, became recalcitrant and cut off the sup-

plies; he had fitted himself out with the beginnings of quite a good law library, which, upon some sudden losses on the turf, he had been obliged to sell before they were paid for; and his bookseller, hearing some rumour of the event, took out a warrant for his arrest. Innes had early word of it, and was able to take precautions. In this immediate welter of his affairs, with an unpleasant charge hanging over him, he had judged it the part of prudence to be off instantly, had written a fervid letter to his father at Inverauld, and put himself in the coach for Crossmichael. Any port in a storm! He was manfully turning his back on the Parliament House and its gay babble, on porter and oysters, the racecourse and the ring; and manfully prepared, until these clouds should have blown by, to share a living grave with Archie Weir at Hermiston.

To do him justice, he was no less surprised to be going than Archie was to see him come; and he carried off his wonder with an infinitely better grace.

"Well, here I am!" said he, as he alighted. "Pylades has come to Orestes at last. By the way, did you get my answer? No? How very provoking! Well, here I am to answer for myself, and that's better still."

"I am very glad to see you, of course," said Archie. "I make you heartily welcome, of course. But you surely have not come to stay,



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with the Courts still sitting; is that not most unwise?"

"Damn the Courts!" says Frank. "What are the Courts to friendship and a little fishing?"

And so it was agreed that he was to stay, with no term to the visit but the term which he had privily set to it himself—the day, namely, when his father should have come down with the dust, and he should be able to pacify the bookseller. On such vague conditions there began for these two young men (who were not even friends) a life of great familiarity and, as the days grew on, less and less intimacy. They were together at meal-times, together o' nights when the hour had come for whisky-toddy; but it might have been noticed (had there been any one to pay heed) that they were rarely so much together by day. Archie had Hermiston to attend to, multifarious activities in the hills, in which he did not require, and had even refused, Frank's escort. He would be off sometimes in the morning and leave only a note on the breakfast-table to announce the fact; and sometimes, with no notice at all, he would not return for dinner until the hour was long past. Innes groaned under these desertions; it required all his philosophy to sit down to a solitary breakfast with composure, and all his unaffected good-nature to be able to greet Archie with friendliness on the more rare ocassions when he came home late for dinner.



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"I wonder what on earth he finds to do, Mrs. Elliott?" said he one morning, after he had just read the hasty billet and sat down to table.

"I suppose it will be business, sir," replied the housekeeper dryly, measuring his distance off to him by an indicated curtsey.

"But I can't imagine what business!" he reiterated.

"I suppose it will be *his* business," retorted the austere Kirstie.

He turned to her with that happy brightness that made the charm of his disposition, and broke into a peal of healthy and natural laughter.

"Well played, Mrs. Elliott!" he cried, and the housekeeper's face relaxed into the shadow of an iron smile. "Well played indeed!" said he. "But you must not be making a stranger of me like that. Why, Archie and I were at the High School together, and we've been to College together, and we were going to the Bar together, when—you know! Dear me, dear me! what a pity that was! A life spoiled, a fine young fellow as good as buried here in the wilderness with rustics; and all for what? A frolic, silly, if you like, but no more. God, how good your scones are, Mrs. Elliott!"

"They're no' mines, it was the lassie made them," said Kirstie; "and, saving your presence, there's little sense in taking the Lord's name in vain about idle vivers that you fill your kyte wi'."

"I daresay you're perfectly right, ma'am,"



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quoth the imperturbable Frank. "But, as I was saying, this is a pitiable business, this about poor Archie; and you and I might do worse than put our heads together, like a couple of sensible people, and bring it to an end. Let me tell you, ma'am, that Archie is really quite a promising young man, and in my opinion he would do well at the Bar. As for his father, no one can deny his ability, and I don't fancy any one would care to deny that he has the deil's own temper——"

"If you'll excuse me, Mr. Innes, I think the lass is crying on me," said Kirstie, and flounced from the room.

"The damned, cross-grained old broomstick!" ejaculated Innes.

In the meantime, Kirstie had escaped into the kitchen, and before her vassal gave vent to her feelings.

"Here, ettercap! Ye'll have to wait on yon Innes! I canna haud myself in. 'Puir Erchie'! I'd 'puir Erchie' him, if I had my way! And Hermiston with the deil's ain temper! God, let him take Hermiston's scones out of his mouth first. There's no' a hair on ayther o' the Weirs that hasna mair spunk and dirdum to it than what he has in his hale dwaibly body! Settin' up his snash to me! Let him gang to the black toon where he's mebbe wantit—birling in a curricle—wi' pimatum on his heid—making a mess o' himsel' wi' nesty hizzies—a fair dis-



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grace!" It was impossible to hear without admiration Kirstie's graduated disgust, as she brought forth, one after another, these somewhat baseless charges. Then she remembered her immediate purpose, and turned again on her fascinated auditor. "Do ye no' hear me, tawpie? Do ye no' hear what I'm tellin' ye? Will I have to shoo ye in to him? If I come to attend to ye, mistress!" And the maid fled the kitchen, which had become practically dangerous, to attend on Innes's wants in the front parlour.

*Tantæne iræ?* Has the reader perceived the reason? Since Frank's coming there were no more hours of gossip over the supper tray! All his blandishments were in vain; he had started handicapped on the race for Mrs. Elliott's favour.

But it was a strange thing how misfortune dogged him in his efforts to be genial. I must guard the reader against accepting Kirstie's epithets as evidence; she was more concerned for their vigour than for their accuracy. Dwaibly, for instance; nothing could be more calumnious. Frank was the very picture of good looks, good-humour, and manly youth. He had bright eyes with a sparkle and a dance to them, curly hair, a charming smile, brilliant teeth, an admirable carriage of the head, the look of a gentleman, the address of one accustomed to please at first sight and to improve the impression. And with all these advantages, he failed with everyone about Hermiston; with the silent



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shepherd, with the obsequious grieve, with the groom who was also the ploughman, with the gardener and the gardener's sister—a pious, down-hearted woman with a shawl over her ears—he failed equally and flatly. They did not like him, and they showed it. The little maid, indeed, was an exception; she admired him devoutly, probably dreamed of him in her private hours; but she was accustomed to play the part of silent auditor to Kirstie's tirades and silent recipient of Kirstie's buffets, and she had learned not only to be a very capable girl of her years, but a very secret and prudent one besides. Frank was thus conscious that he had one ally and sympathiser in the midst of that general union of disfavour that surrounded, watched, and waited on him in the house of Hermiston; but he had little comfort or society from that alliance, and the demure little maid (twelve on her last birthday) preserved her own counsel, and tripped on his service, brisk, dumbly responsive, but inexorably unconversational. For the others, they were beyond hope and beyond endurance. Never had a young Apollo been cast among such rustic barbarians. But perhaps the cause of his ill-success lay in one trait which was habitual and unconscious with him, yet diagnostic of the man. It was his practice to approach any one person at the expense of some one else. He offered you an alliance against the some one else; he flattered you by slighting him; you



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were drawn into a small intrigue against him before you knew how. Wonderful are the virtues of this process generally; but Frank's mistake was in the choice of the some one else. He was not politic in that; he listened to the voice of irritation. Archie had offended him at first by what he had felt to be rather a dry reception; had offended him since by his frequent absences. He was besides the one figure continually present in Frank's eye; and it was to his immediate dependents that Frank could offer the snare of his sympathy. Now the truth is that the Weirs, father and son, were surrounded by a posse of strenuous loyalists. Of my lord they were vastly proud. It was a distinction in itself to be one of the vassals of the "Hanging Judge," and his gross, formidable joviality was far from unpopular in the neighbourhood of his home. For Archie they had, one and all, a sensitive affection and respect which recoiled from a word of belittlement.

Nor was Frank more successful when he went farther afield. To the Four Black Brothers, for instance, he was antipathetic in the highest degree. Hob thought him too light, Gib too profane. Clem, who saw him but for a day or two before he went to Glasgow, wanted to know what the fule's business was, and whether he meant to stay here all session time! "Yon's a drone," he pronounced. As for Dand, it will be enough to describe their first meeting, when



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Frank had been whipping a river and the rustic celebrity chanced to come along the path.

"I'm told you are quite a poet," Frank had said.

"Wha tell 't ye that, mannie?" had been the unconciliating answer.

"O, everybody," says Frank.

"God! Here's fame!" said the sardonic poet, and he had passed on his way.

Come to think of it, we have here perhaps a truer explanation of Frank's failures. Had he met Mr. Sheriff Scott he could have turned a neater compliment, because Mr. Scott would have been a friend worth making. Dand, on the other hand, he did not value sixpence, and he showed it even while he tried to flatter. Condescension is an excellent thing, but it is strange how one-sided the pleasure of it is! He who goes fishing among the Scots peasantry with condescension for a bait will have an empty basket by evening.

In proof of this theory Frank made a great success of it at the Crossmichael Club, to which Archie took him immediately on his arrival; his own last appearance on that scene of gaiety. Frank was made welcome there at once, continued to go regularly, and had attended a meeting (as the members ever after loved to tell) on the evening before his death. Young Hay and young Pringle appeared again. There was another supper at Windielaws, another dinner at Driffel; and it resulted in Frank being taken to



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the bosom of the county people as unreservedly as he had been repudiated by the country folk. He occupied Hermiston after the manner of an invader in a conquered capital. He was perpetually issuing from it, as from a base, to toddy parties, fishing parties, and dinner parties, to which Archie was not invited, or to which Archie would not go. It was now that the name of The Recluse became general for the young man. Some say that Innes invented it; Innes, at least, spread it abroad.

"How's all with your Recluse to-day?" people would ask.

"O, reclusing away!" Innes would declare, with his bright air of saying something witty; and immediately interrupt the general laughter which he had provoked much more by his air than his words, "Mind you, it's all very well laughing, but I'm not very well pleased. Poor Archie is a good fellow, an excellent fellow, a fellow I always liked. I think it small of him to take his little disgrace so hard and shut himself up. 'Grant that it is a ridiculous story, painfully ridiculous,' I keep telling him. 'Be a man! Live it down, man!' But not he. Of course it's just solitude, and shame, and all that. But I confess I'm beginning to fear the result. It would be all the pities in the world if a really promising fellow like Weir was to end ill. I'm seriously tempted to write to Lord Hermiston, and put it plainly to him."



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"I would if I were you," some of his auditors would say, shaking the head, sitting bewildered and confused at this new view of the matter, so deftly indicated by a single word. "A capital idea!" they would add, and wonder at the *aplomb* and position of this young man, who talked as a matter of course of writing to Hermiston and correcting him upon his private affairs.

And Frank would proceed, sweetly confidential: "I'll give you an idea, now. He's actually sore about the way that I'm received and he's left out in the county—actually jealous and sore. I've rallied him and I've reasoned with him, told him that every one was most kindly inclined towards him, told him even that I was received merely because I was his guest. But it's no use. He will neither accept the invitations he gets, nor stop brooding about the ones where he's left out. What I'm afraid of is that the wound's ulcerating. He had always one of those dark, secret, angry natures—a little underhand and plenty of bile—you know the sort. He must have inherited it from the Weirs, whom I suspect to have been a worthy family of weavers somewhere; what's the cant phrase!—sedentary occupation. It's precisely the kind of character to go wrong in a false position like what his father's made for him, or he's making for himself, whichever you like to call it. And for my part, I think it a disgrace," Frank would say generously.



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Presently the sorrow and anxiety of this disinterested friend took shape. He began in private, in conversations of two, to talk vaguely of bad habits and low habits. "I must say I'm afraid he's going wrong altogether," he would say. "I'll tell you plainly, and between ourselves, I scarcely like to stay there any longer; only, man, I'm positively afraid to leave him alone. You'll see, I shall be blamed for it later on. I'm staying at a great sacrifice. I'm hindering my chances at the Bar, and I can't blind my eyes to it. And what I'm afraid of is that I'm going to get kicked for it all round before all's done. You see, nobody believes in friendship nowadays."

"Well, Innes," his interlocutor would reply, "it's very good of you, I must say that. If there's any blame going you'll always be sure of *my* good word, for one thing."

"Well," Frank would continue, "candidly, I don't say it's pleasant. He has a very rough way with him; his father's son, you know. I don't say he's rude—of course, I couldn't be expected to stand that—but he steers very near the wind. No, it's not pleasant; but I tell ye, man, in conscience I don't think it would be fair to leave him. Mind you, I don't say there's anything actually wrong. What I say is that I don't like the looks of it, man!" and he would press the arm of his momentary confidant.



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In the early stages I am persuaded there was no malice. He talked but for the pleasure of airing himself. He was essentially glib, as becomes the young advocate, and essentially careless of the truth, which is the mark of the young ass; and so he talked at random. There was no particular bias, but that one which is indigenous and universal, to flatter himself and to please and interest the present friend. And by thus milling air out of his mouth, he had presently built up a presentation of Archie which was known and talked of in all corners of the county. Wherever there was a residential house and a walled garden, wherever there was a dwarfish castle and a park, wherever a quadruple cottage by the ruins of a peel-tower showed an old family going down, and wherever a handsome villa with a carriage approach and a shrubbery marked the coming up of a new one—probably on the wheels of machinery—Archie began to be regarded in the light of a dark, perhaps a vicious mystery, and the future developments of his career to be looked for with uneasiness and confidential whispering. He had done something disgraceful, my dear. What, was not precisely known, and that good kind young man, Mr. Innes, did his best to make light of it. But there it was. And Mr. Innes was very anxious about him now; he was really uneasy, my dear; he was positively wrecking his own prospects because he dared not leave him alone. How wholly we all lie at the mercy of a



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single prater, not needfully with any malign purpose! And if a man but talks of himself in the right spirit, refers to his virtuous actions by the way, and never applies to them the name of virtue, how easily his evidence is accepted in the court of public opinion!

All this while, however, there was a more poisonous ferment at work between the two lads, which came late indeed to the surface, but had modified and magnified their dissensions from the first. To an idle, shallow, easy-going customer like Frank, the smell of a mystery was attractive. It gave his mind something to play with, like a new toy to a child; and it took him on the weak side, for like many young men coming to the Bar, and before they have been tried and found wanting, he flattered himself he was a fellow of unusual quickness and penetration. They knew nothing of Sherlock Holmes in these days, but there was a good deal said of Talleyrand. And if you could have caught Frank off his guard, he would have confessed with a smirk, that, if he resembled any one, it was the Marquis de Talleyrand-Périgord. It was on the occasion of Archie's first absence that this interest took root. It was vastly deepened when Kirstie resented his curiosity at breakfast, and that same afternoon there occurred another scene which clinched the business. He was fishing Swingleburn, Archie accompanying him, when the latter looked at his watch.



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"Well, good-bye," said he. "I have something to do. See you at dinner."

"Don't be in such a hurry," cries Frank. "Hold on till I get my rod up. I'll go with you; I'm sick of flogging this ditch."

And he began to reel up his line.

Archie stood speechless. He took a long while to recover his wits under this direct attack; but by the time he was ready with his answer, and the angle was almost packed up, he had become completely Weir, and the hanging face gloomed on his young shoulders. He spoke with a laboured composure, a laboured kindness even; but a child could see that his mind was made up.

"I beg your pardon, Innes; I don't want to be disagreeable, but let us understand one another from the beginning. When I want your company, I'll let you know."

"Oh!" cries Frank, "you don't want my company, don't you?"

"Apparently not just now," replied Archie. "I even indicated to you when I did, if you'll remember—and that was at dinner. If we two fellows are to live together pleasantly—and I see no reason why we should not—it can only be by respecting each other's privacy. If we begin intruding——"

"Oh, come! I'll take this at no man's hands. Is this the way you treat a guest and an old friend?" cried Innes.

"Just go home and think over what I said by



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yourself," continued Archie, "whether it's reasonable, or whether it's really offensive or not; and let's meet at dinner as though nothing had happened. I'll put it this way, if you like—that I know my own character, that I'm looking forward (with great pleasure, I assure you) to a long visit from you, and that I'm taking precautions at the first. I see the thing that we—that I, if you like—might fall out upon, and I step in and *obsto principiis*. I wager you five pounds you'll end by seeing that I mean friendliness, and I assure you, Francie, I do," he added, relenting.

Bursting with anger, but incapable of speech, Innes shouldered his rod, made a gesture of farewell, and strode off down the burnside. Archie watched him go without moving. He was sorry, but quite unashamed. He hated to be inhospitable, but in one thing he was his father's son. He had a strong sense that his house was his own and no man else's; and to lie at a guest's mercy was what he refused. He hated to seem harsh. But that was Frank's look-out. If Frank had been commonly discreet, he would have been decently courteous. And there was another consideration. The secret he was protecting was not his own merely; it was hers; it belonged to that inexpressible she who was fast taking possession of his soul, and whom he would soon have defended at the cost of burning cities. By the time he had watched Frank as far as the



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Swingleburnfoot, appearing and disappearing in the tarnished heather, still stalking at a fierce gait but already dwindled in the distance into less than the smallness of Lilliput, he could afford to smile at the occurrence. Either Frank would go, and that would be a relief—or he would continue to stay, and his host must continue to endure him. And Archie was now free—by devious paths, behind hillocks and in the hollow of burns—to make for the trysting-place where Kirstie, cried about by the curlew and the plover, waited and burned for his coming by the Covenanter's stone.

Innes went off down-hill in a passion of resentment, easy to be understood, but which yielded progressively to the needs of his situation. He cursed Archie for a cold-hearted, unfriendly, rude dog; and himself still more passionately for a fool in having come to Hermiston when he might have sought refuge in almost any other house in Scotland, but the step once taken was practically irretrievable. He had no more ready money to go anywhere else; he would have to borrow from Archie the next club-night; and ill as he thought of his host's manners, he was sure of his practical generosity. Frank's resemblance to Talleyrand strikes me as imaginary; but at least not Talleyrand himself could have more obediently taken his lesson from the facts. He met Archie at dinner without resentment, almost with cordiality. You must take your friends as you find



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them, he would have said. Archie couldn't help being his father's son, or his grandfather's, the hypothetical weaver's, grandson. The son of a hunks, he was still a hunks at heart, incapable of true generosity and consideration; but he had other qualities with which Frank could divert himself in the meanwhile, and to enjoy which it was necessary that Frank should keep his temper.

So excellently was it controlled that he awoke next morning with his head full of a different, though a cognate subject. What was Archie's little game? Why did he shun Frank's company? What was he keeping secret? Was he keeping tryst with somebody, and was it a woman? It would be a good joke and a fair revenge to discover. To that task he set himself with a great deal of patience, which might have surprised his friends, for he had been always credited not with patience so much as brilliancy; and little by little, from one point to another, he at last succeeded in piecing out the situation. First he remarked that, although Archie set out in all the directions of the compass, he always came home again from some point between the south and west. From the study of a map, and in consideration of the great expanse of untenanted moorland running in that direction towards the sources of the Clyde, he laid his finger on Cauldstaneslap and two other neighbouring farms, Kingsmuirs and Polintarf. But it was difficult to advance farther. With his rod for a pretext,



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he vainly visited each of them in turn; nothing was to be seen suspicious about this trinity of moorland settlements. He would have tried to follow Archie, had it been the least possible, but the nature of the land precluded the idea. He did the next best, ensconced himself in a quiet corner, and pursued his movements with a telescope. It was equally in vain, and he soon wearied of his futile vigilance, left the telescope at home, and had almost given the matter up in despair, when, on the twenty-seventh day of his visit, he was suddenly confronted with the person whom he sought. The first Sunday Kirstie had managed to stay away from kirk on some pretext of indisposition, which was more truly modesty; the pleasure of beholding Archie seeming too sacred, too vivid for that public place. On the two following, Frank had himself been absent on some of his excursions among the neighbouring families. It was not until the fourth, accordingly, that Frank had occasion to set eyes on the enchantress. With the first look, all hesitation was over. She came with the Cauldstaneslap party; then she lived at Cauldstaneslap. Here was Archie's secret, here was the woman, and more than that—though I have need here of every manageable attenuation of language—with the first look, he had already entered himself as rival. It was a good deal in pique, it was a little in revenge, it was much in genuine admiration: the devil may decide the



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proportions; I cannot, and it is very likely that Frank could not.

"Mighty attractive milkmaid," he observed, on the way home.

"Who?" said Archie.

"O, the girl you're looking at—aren't you? Forward there on the road. She came attended by the rustic bard; presumably, therefore, belongs to his exalted family. The single objection! for the four Black Brothers are awkward customers. If anything were to go wrong, Gib would gibber, and Clem would prove inclement; and Dand fly in danders, and Hob blow up in gobbets. It would be a Helliott of a business!"

"Very humorous, I am sure," said Archie.

"Well, I am trying to be so," said Frank. "It's none too easy in this place, and with your solemn society, my dear fellow. But confess that the milkmaid has found favour in your eyes or resign all claim to be a man of taste."

"It is no matter," returned Archie.

But the other continued to look at him, steadily and quizzically, and his colour slowly rose and deepened under the glance, until not impudence itself could have denied that he was blushing. And at this Archie lost some of his control. He changed his stick from one hand to the other, and—"O, for God's sake, don't be an ass!" he cried.

"Ass? That's the retort delicate without doubt," says Frank. "Beware of the homespun



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brothers, dear. If they come into the dance, you'll see who's an ass. Think now, if they only applied (say) a quarter as much talent as I have applied to the question of what Mr. Archie does with his evening hours, and why he is so unaffectedly nasty when the subject's touched on——"

"You are touching on it now," interrupted Archie, with a wince.

"Thank you. That was all I wanted, an articulate confession," said Frank.

"I beg to remind you——" began Archie.

But he was interrupted in turn. "My dear fellow, don't. It's quite needless. The subject's dead and buried."

And Frank began to talk hastily on other matters, an art in which he was an adept, for it was his gift to be fluent on anything or nothing. But although Archie had the grace or the timidity to suffer him to rattle on, he was by no means done with the subject. When he came home to dinner, he was greeted with a sly demand, how things were looking "Cauldstaneslap ways." Frank took his first glass of port out after dinner to the toast of Kirstie, and later in the evening he returned to the charge again.

"I say, Weir, you'll excuse me for returning again to this affair. I've been thinking it over, and I wish to beg you very seriously to be more careful. It's not a safe business. Not safe, my boy," said he.

"What?" said Archie.



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"Well, it's your own fault if I must put a name on the thing; but really, as a friend, I cannot stand by and see you rushing head down into these dangers. My dear boy," said he, holding up a warning cigar, "consider what is to be the end of it?"

"The end of what?"—Archie, helpless with irritation, persisted in this dangerous and ungracious guard.

"Well, the end of the milkmaid; or, to speak more by the card, the end of Miss Christina Elliott of the Cauldstaneslap?"

"I assure you," Archie broke out, "this is all a figment of your imagination. There is nothing to be said against that young lady; you have no right to introduce her name into the conversation."

"I'll make a note of it," said Frank. "She shall henceforth be nameless, nameless, nameless, Gregarach! I make a note besides of your valuable testimony to her character. I only want to look at this thing as a man of the world. Admitted she's an angel—but, my good fellow, is she a lady?"

This was torture to Archie. "I beg your pardon," he said, struggling to be composed, "but because you have wormed yourself into my confidence——"

"Oh, come!" cried Frank. "Your confidence? It was rosy but unconsenting. Your confidence, indeed! Now, look! This is what I must say,



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Weir, for it concerns your safety and good character, and therefore my honour as your friend. You say I wormed myself into your confidence. Wormed is good. But what have I done? I have put two and two together, just as the parish will be doing to-morrow, and the whole of Tweeddale in two weeks, and the Black Brothers —well, I won't put a date on that; it will be a dark and stormy morning. Your secret, in other words, is poor Poll's. And I want to ask of you as a friend whether you like the prospect? There are two horns to your dilemma, and I must say for myself I should look mighty ruefully on either. Do you see yourself explaining to the four Black Brothers? or do you see yourself presenting the milkmaid to papa as the future lady of Hermiston? Do you? I tell you plainly, I don't."

Archie rose. "I will hear no more of this," he said in a trembling voice.

But Frank again held up his cigar. "Tell me one thing first. Tell me if this is not a friend's part that I am playing?"

"I believe you think it so," replied Archie. "I can go as far as that. I can do so much justice to your motives. But I will hear no more of it. I am going to bed."

"That's right, Weir," said Frank, heartily. "Go to bed and think over it; and I say, man, don't forget your prayers! I don't often do the moral—don't go in for that sort of thing—but when I do there's one thing sure, that I mean it."



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So Archie marched off to bed, and Frank sat alone by the table for another hour or so, smiling to himself richly. There was nothing vindictive in his nature; but, if revenge came in his way, it might as well be good, and the thought of Archie's pillow reflections that night was indescribably sweet to him. He felt a pleasant sense of power. He looked down on Archie as on a very little boy whose strings he pulled—as on a horse whom he had backed and bridled by sheer power of intelligence, and whom he might ride to glory or the grave at pleasure. Which was it to be? He lingered long, relishing the details of schemes that he was too idle to pursue. Poor cork upon a torrent, he tasted that night the sweets of omnipotence, and brooded like a deity over the strands of that intrigue which was to shatter him before the summer waned.



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## CHAPTER VIII

### A NOCTURNAL VISIT

KIRSTIE had many causes of distress. More and more as we grow old—and yet more and more as we grow old and are women, frozen by the fear of age—we come to rely on the voice as the single outlet of the soul. Only thus, in the curtailment of our means, can we relieve the straitened cry of the passion within us; only thus, in the bitter and sensitive shyness of advancing years, can we maintain relations with those vivacious figures of the young that still show before us, and tend daily to become no more than the moving wall-paper of life. Talk is the last link, the last relation. But with the end of the conversation, when the voice stops and the bright face of the listener is turned away, solitude falls again on the bruised heart. Kirstie had lost her "cannie hour at e'en"; she could no more wander with Archie, a ghost, if you will, but a happy ghost, in fields Elysian. And to her it was as if the whole world had fallen silent; to him, but an unremarkable change of amusements. And she raged to know it. The effer-



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vescency of her passionate and irritable nature rose within her at times to bursting point.

This is the price paid by age for unseasonable ardours of feeling. It must have been so for Kirstie at any time when the occasion chanced; but it so fell out that she was deprived of this delight in the hour when she had most need of it, when she had most to say, most to ask, and when she trembled to recognise her sovereignty not merely in abeyance but annulled. For, with the clairvoyance of a genuine love, she had pierced the mystery that had so long embarrassed Frank. She was conscious, even before it was carried out, even on that Sunday night when it began, of an invasion of her rights; and a voice told her the invader's name. Since then, by arts, by accident, by small things observed, and by the general drift of Archie's humour, she had passed beyond all possibility of doubt. With a sense of justice that Lord Hermiston might have envied, she had that day in church considered and admitted the attractions of the younger Kirstie; and with the profound humanity and sentimentality of her nature, she had recognised the coming of fate. Not thus would she have chosen. She had seen, in imagination, Archie wedded to some tall, powerful, and rosy heroine of the golden locks, made in her own image, for whom she would have strewed the bride-bed with delight; and now she could have wept to see the ambition falsified. But the



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gods had pronounced, and her doom was otherwise.

She lay tossing in bed that night, besieged with feverish thoughts. There were dangerous matters pending, a battle was toward, over the fate of which she hung in jealousy, sympathy, fear, and alternate loyalty and disloyalty to either side. Now she was reincarnated in her niece, and now in Archie. Now she saw, through the girl's eyes, the youth on his knees to her, heard his persuasive instances with a deadly weakness, and received his over-mastering caresses. Anon, with a revulsion, her temper raged to see such utmost favours of fortune and love squandered on a brat of a girl, one of her own house, using her own name—a deadly ingredient—and that "didna ken her ain mind an' was as black's your hat." Now she trembled lest her deity should plead in vain, loving the idea of success for him like a triumph of nature; anon, with returning loyalty to her own family and sex, she trembled for Kirstie and the credit of the Elliotts. And again she had a vision of herself, the day over for her old-world tales and local gossip, bidding farewell to her last link with life and brightness and love; and behind and beyond, she saw but the blank butt-end where she must crawl to die. Had she then come to the lees? she, so great, so beautiful, with a heart as fresh as a girl's and strong as womanhood? It could not be, and yet it was so; and for a moment her bed was



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horrible to her as the sides of the grave. And she looked forward over a waste of hours, and saw herself go on to rage, and tremble, and be softened, and rage again, until the day came and the labours of the day must be renewed.

Suddenly she heard feet on the stairs—his feet, and soon after the sound of a window-sash flung open. She sat up with her heart beating. He had gone to his room alone, and he had not gone to bed. She might again have one of her night cracks; and at the entrancing prospect, a change came over her mind; with the approach of this hope of pleasure, all the baser metal became immediately obliterated from her thoughts. She rose, all woman, and all the best of woman, tender, pitiful, hating the wrong, loyal to her own sex—and all the weakest of that dear miscellany, nourishing, cherishing next her soft heart, voicelessly flattering, hopes that she would have died sooner than have acknowledged. She tore off her nightcap, and her hair fell about her shoulders in profusion. Undying coquetry awoke. By the faint light of her nocturnal rush, she stood before the looking-glass, carried her shapely arms above her head, and gathered up the treasures of her tresses. She was never backward to admire herself; that kind of modesty was a stranger to her nature; and she paused, struck with a pleased wonder at the sight. "Ye daft auld wife!" she said, answering a thought that was not; and she blushed with the innocent conscious-



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ness of a child. Hastily she did up the massive and shining coils, hastily donned a wrapper, and with the rush-light in her hand, stole into the hall. Below stairs she heard the clock ticking the deliberate seconds, and Frank jingling with the decanters in the dining-room. Aversion rose in her, bitter and momentary. "Nesty, tippling puggy!" she thought; and the next moment she had knocked guardedly at Archie's door and was bidden enter.

Archie had been looking out into the ancient blackness, pierced here and there with a rayless star; taking the sweet air of the moors and the night into his bosom deeply; seeking, perhaps finding, peace after the manner of the unhappy. He turned round as she came in, and showed her a pale face against the window-frame.

"Is that you, Kirstie?" he asked. "Come in!"

"It's unco' late, my dear," said Kirstie, affecting unwillingness.

"No, no," he answered, "not at all. Come in, if you want a crack. I am not sleepy, God knows!"

She advanced, took a chair by the toilet-table and the candle, and set the rush-light at her foot. Something—it might be in the comparative disorder of her dress, it might be the emotion that now welled in her bosom—had touched her with a wand of transformation, and she seemed young with the youth of goddesses.



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"Mr. Erchie," she began, "what's this that's come to ye?"

"I am not aware of anything that has come," said Archie, and blushed and repented bitterly that he had let her in.

"Oh, my dear, that'll no dae!" said Kirstie. "It's ill to blind the eyes of love. Oh, Mr. Erchie, tak' a thocht ere it's ower late. Ye shouldna be impatient o' the braws o' life, they'll a' come in their saison, like the sun and the rain. Ye're young yet; ye've mony cantie years afore ye. See and dinna wreck yersel' at the outset like sae mony ithers! Hae patience—they telled me aye that was the owercome o' life—hae patience, there's a braw day coming yet. Gude kens it never cam' to me; and here I am wi' nayther man nor bairn to ca' my ain, wearyin' a' folks wi' my ill tongue, and you just the first, Mr. Erchie!"

"I have a difficulty in knowing what you mean," said Archie.

"Weel, and I'll tell ye," she said. "It's just this, that I'm feared. I'm feared for ye, my dear. Remember, your faither is a hard man, reapin' where he hasna sowed and gaitherin' where he hasna strawed. It's easy speakin', but mind! Ye'll have to look in the gurly face o'm, where it's ill to look, and vain to look for mercy. Ye mind me o' a bonny ship pitten oot into the black and gowsty seas—ye're a' safe still, sittin' quait and crackin' wi' Kirstie in your lown chalmer; but whaur will ye be the morn,



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and in whatten horror o' the fearsome tempest, cryin' on the hills to cover ye?"

"Why, Kirstie, you're very enigmatical to-night—and very eloquent," Archie put in.

"And, my dear Mr. Erchie," she continued, with a change of voice, "ye mauna think that I canna sympathise wi' ye. Ye mauna think that I havena been young mysel'. Lang syne, when I was a bit lassie, no' twenty yet——" She paused and sighed. "Clean and caller, wi' a fit like the hinney bee," she continued. "I was aye big and buirdly, ye maun understand; a bonny figure o' a woman, though I say it that suldna—built to rear bairns—braw bairns they suld hae been, and grand I would hae likit it! But I was young, dear, wi' the bonny glint o' youth in my e'en, and little I dreamed I'd ever be tellin' ye this, an auld, lanely, rudas wife! Weel, Mr. Erchie, there was a lad cam' courtin' me, as was but naetural. Mony had come before, and I would nane o' them. But this yin had a tongue to wile the birds frae the lift and the bees frae the foxglove bells. Deary me, but it's lang syne. Folk have dee'd sinsyne and been buried, and are forgotten, and bairns been born and got merrit and got bairns o' their ain. Sinsyne woods have been plantit, and have grawn up and are bonny trees, and the joes sit in their shadow, and sinsyne auld estates have changed hands, and there have been wars and rumours of wars on the face of the earth. And here I'm still—



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like an auld droopit craw—lookin' on and craikin'. But, Mr. Erchie, do ye no' think that I have mind o' it a' still? I was dwallin' then in my faither's house; and it's a curious thing that we were whiles trysted in the Deil's Hags. And do ye no' think that I have mind of the bonny simmer days, the lang miles, o' the bluid-red heather, the cryin' o' the whaups, and the lad and the lassie that was trysted? Do ye no' think that I mind how the hilly sweetness ran about my hairt? Ay, Mr. Erchie, I ken the way o' it —fine do I ken the way—how the grace o' God takes them like Paul of Tarsus, when they think o' it least, and drives the pair o' them into a land which is like a dream, and the world and the folks in't are nae mair than clouds to the puir lassie, and Heeven nae mair than windle-straes, if she can but pleesure him! Until Tam dee'd—that was my story," she broke off to say, "he dee'd, and I wasna at the buryin'. But while he was here, I could take care o' mysel'. And can yon puir lassie?"

Kirstie, her eyes shining with unshed tears, stretched out her hand towards him appealingly; the bright and the dull gold of her hair flashed and smouldered in the coils behind her comely head, like the rays of an eternal youth; the pure colour had risen in her face; and Archie was abashed alike by her beauty and her story. He came towards her slowly from the window, took up her hand in his and kissed it.



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"Kirstie," he said hoarsely, "you have misjudged me sorely. I have always thought of her, I wouldna harm her for the universe, my woman."

"Eh, lad, and that's easy sayin'," cried Kirstie, "but it's nae sae easy doin'! Man, do ye no' comprehend that it's God's wull we should be blendit and glamoured, and have nae command over our ain members at a time like that? My bairn," she cried, still holding his hand, "think o' the puir lass! have pity upon her, Erchie! and O, be wise for twa! Think o' the risk she rins! I have seen ye, and what's to prevent ithers? I saw ye once in the Hags, in my ain howl, and I was wae to see ye there—in pairt for the omen, for I think there's a weird on the place—and in pairt for puir nakit envy and bitterness o' hairt. It's strange ye should forgather there tae! God! but yon puir, thrawn, auld Covenanter's seen a heap o' human natur since he lookit his last on the musket-barrels, if he never saw nane afore," she added with a kind of wonder in her eyes.

"I swear by my honour I have done her no wrong," said Archie. "I swear by my honour and the redemption of my soul that there shall none be done her. I have heard of this before. I have been foolish, Kirstie, not unkind and, above all, not base."

"There's my bairn!" said Kirstie, rising. "I'll can trust ye noo, I'll can gang to my bed wi' an



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easy hairt." And then she saw in a flash how barren had been her triumph. Archie had promised to spare the girl, and he would keep it; but who had promised to spare Archie? What was to be the end of it? Over a maze of difficulties she glanced, and saw, at the end of every passage, the flinty countenance of Hermiston. And a kind of horror fell upon her at what she had done. She wore a tragic mask. "Erchie, the Lord peety you, dear, and peety me! I have buildit on this foundation,"—laying her hand heavily on his shoulder—"and buildit hie, and pit my hairt in the buildin' of it. If the hale hypothec were to fa', I think, laddie, I would dee! Excuse a daft wife that loves ye, and that kenned your mither. And for His name's sake keep yersel' frae inordinate desires; haud your hairt in baith your hands, carry it canny and laigh; dinna send it up like a bairn's kite into the collieshangie o' the wunds! Mind, Maister Erchie dear, that this life's a disappointment, and a mouthfu' o' mools is the appointed end."

"Ay, but Kirstie, my woman, you're asking me ower much at last," said Archie, profoundly moved, and lapsing into the broad Scots. "Ye're asking what nae man can grant ye, what only the Lord of heaven can grant ye if He see fit. Ay! And can even He? I can promise ye what I shall do, and you can depend on that. But how I shall feel—my woman, that is long past thinking of!"



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They were both standing by now opposite each other. The face of Archie wore the wretched semblance of a smile; hers was convulsed for a moment.

"Promise me ae thing," she cried, in a sharp voice. "Promise me ye'll never do naething without telling me."

"No, Kirstie, I canna promise ye that," he replied. "I have promised enough, God kens!"

"May the blessing of God lift and rest upon ye, dear!" she said.

"God bless ye, my old friend," said he.



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## CHAPTER IX

### AT THE WEAVER'S STONE

IT was late in the afternoon when Archie drew near by the hill path to the Praying Weaver's Stone. The Hags were in shadow. But still, through the gate of the Slap, the sun shot a last arrow, which sped far and straight across the surface of the moss, here and there touching and shining on a tussock, and lighted at length on the gravestone and the small figure awaiting him there. The emptiness and solitude of the great moors seemed to be concentrated there, and Kirstie pointed out by that figure of sunshine for the only inhabitant. His first sight of her was thus excruciatingly sad, like a glimpse of a world from which all light, comfort, and society were on the point of vanishing. And the next moment, when she had turned her face to him and the quick smile had enlightened it, the whole face of nature smiled upon him in her smile of welcome. Archie's slow pace was quickened; his legs hasted to her though his heart was hanging back. The girl, upon her side, drew herself together slowly and stood up, expectant; she was



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all languor, her face was gone white; her arms ached for him, her soul was on tip-toes. But he deceived her, pausing a few steps away, not less white than herself, and holding up his hand with a gesture of denial.

"No, Christina, not to-day," he said. "To-day I have to talk to you seriously. Sit ye down, please, there where you were. Please!" he repeated.

The revulsion of feeling in Christina's heart was violent. To have longed and waited these weary hours for him, rehearsing her endearments —to have seen him at last come—to have been ready there, breathless, wholly passive, his to do what he would with—and suddenly to have found herself confronted with a grey-faced, harsh schoolmaster—it was too rude a shock. She could have wept, but pride withheld her. She sat down on the stone, from which she had arisen, part with the instinct of obedience, part as though she had been thrust there. What was this? Why was she rejected? Had she ceased to please? She stood here offering her wares, and he would none of them! And yet they were all his! His to take and keep, not his to refuse though! In her quick petulant nature, a moment ago on fire with hope, thwarted love and wounded vanity wrought. The schoolmaster that there is in all men, to the despair of all girls and most women, was now completely in possession of Archie. He had passed a night of



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sermons; a day of reflection; he had come wound up to do his duty; and the set mouth, which in him only betrayed the effort of his will, to her seemed the expression of an averted heart. It was the same with his constrained voice and embarrassed utterance; and if so—if it was all over—the pang of the thought took away from her the power of thinking.

He stood before her some way off. "Kirstie, there's been too much of this. We've seen too much of each other." She looked up quickly and her eyes contracted. "There's no good ever comes of these secret meetings. They're not frank, not honest truly, and I ought to have seen it. People have begun to talk; and it's not right of me. Do you see?"

"I see somebody will have been talking to ye," she said sullenly.

"They have, more than one of them," replied Archie.

"And whae were they?" she cried. "And what kind o' love do ye ca' that, that's ready to gang round like a whirligig at folk talking? Do ye think they havena talked to me?"

"Have they indeed?" said Archie, with a quick breath. "That is what I feared. Who were they? Who has dared——"

Archie was on the point of losing his temper.

As a matter of fact, not any one had talked to Christina on the matter; and she strenuously



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repeated her own first question in a panic of self-defence.

"Ah, well! what does it matter?" he said. "They were good folk that wished well to us, and the great affair is that there are people talking. My dear girl, we have to be wise. We must not wreck our lives at the outset. They may be long and happy yet, and we must see to it, Kirstie, like God's rational creatures and not like fool children. There is one thing we must see to before all. You're worth waiting for, Kirstie! worth waiting for a generation; it would be enough reward."—And here he remembered the schoolmaster again, and very unwisely took to following wisdom. "The first thing that we must see to, is that there shall be no scandal about, for my father's sake. That would ruin all; do ye no' see that?"

Kirstie was a little pleased, there had been some show of warmth of sentiment in what Archie had said last. But the dull irritation still persisted in her bosom; with the aboriginal instinct, having suffered herself, she wished to make Archie suffer.

And besides, there had come out the word she had always feared to hear from his lips, the name of his father. It is not to be supposed that, during so many days with a love avowed between them, some reference had not been made to their conjoint future. It had in fact been often touched upon, and from the first had been the



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sore point. Kirstie had wilfully closed the eye of thought; she would not argue even with herself; gallant, desperate little heart, she had accepted the command of that supreme attraction like the call of fate and marched blindfold on her doom. But Archie, with his masculine sense of responsibility, must reason; he must dwell on some future good, when the present good was all in all to Kirstie; he must talk—and talk lamely, as necessity drove him—of what was to be. Again and again he had touched on marriage; again and again been driven back into indistinctness by a memory of Lord Hermiston. And Kirstie had been swift to understand and quick to choke down and smother the understanding; swift to leap up in flame at a mention of that hope, which spoke volumes to her vanity and her love, that she might one day be Mrs. Weir of Hermiston; swift, also, to recognise in his stumbling or throttled utterance the death-knell of these expectations, and constant, poor girl! in her large-minded madness, to go on and to reck nothing of the future. But these unfinished references, these blinks in which his heart spoke, and his memory and reason rose up to silence it before the words were well uttered, gave her unqualifiable agony. She was raised up and dashed down again bleeding. The recurrence of the subject forced her, for however short a time, to open her eyes on what she did not wish to see; and it had invariably ended in another dis-



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appointment. So now again, at the mere wind of its coming, at the mere mention of his father's name—who might seem indeed to have accompanied them in their whole moorland courtship, an awful figure in a wig with an ironical and bitter smile, present to guilty consciousness—she fled from it head down.

"Ye havena told me yet," she said, "who was it spoke?"

"Your aunt for one," said Archie.

"Auntie Kirstie?" she cried. "And what do I care for my Auntie Kirstie?"

"She cares a great deal for her niece," replied Archie, in kind reproof.

"Troth, and it's the first I've heard of it," retorted the girl.

"The question here is not who it is, but what they say, what they have noticed," pursued the lucid schoolmaster. "That is what we have to think of in self-defence."

"Auntie Kirstie, indeed! A bitter, thrawn auld maid that's fomented trouble in the country before I was born, and will be doing it still, I daur say, when I'm deid! It's in her nature; it's as natural for her as it's for a sheep to eat."

"Pardon me, Kirstie, she was not the only one," interposed Archie. "I had two warnings, two sermons, last night, both most kind and considerate. Had you been there, I promise you you would have grat, my dear! And they opened my eyes. I saw we were going a wrong way."



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"Who was the other one?" Kirstie demanded.

By this time Archie was in the condition of a hunted beast. He had come, braced and resolute; he was to trace out a line of conduct for the pair of them in a few cold, convincing sentences; he had now been there some time, and he was still staggering round the outworks and undergoing what he felt to be a savage cross-examination.

"Mr. Frank!" she cried. "What nex', I would like to ken?"

"He spoke most kindly and truly."

"What like did he say?"

"I am not going to tell you; you have nothing to do with that," cried Archie, startled to find he had admitted so much.

"Oh, I have naething to do with it!" she repeated, springing to her feet. "A'body at Hermiston's free to pass their opinions upon me, but I have naething to do wi' it! Was this at prayers like? Did ye ca' the grieve into the consultation? Little wonder if a'body's talking, when ye make a'body ye're confidants! But as you say, Mr. Weir,—most kindly, most considerately, most truly, I'm sure,—I have naething to do with it. And I think I'll better be going. I'll be wishing you good-evening, Mr. Weir." And she made him a stately curtsey, shaking as she did so from head to foot, with the barren ecstasy of temper.

Poor Archie stood dumbfounded. She had



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moved some steps away from him before he recovered the gift of articulate speech.

"Kirstie!" he cried. "Oh, Kirstie woman!"

There was in his voice a ring of appeal, a clang of mere astonishment that showed the schoolmaster was vanquished.

She turned round on him. "What do ye Kirstie me for?" she retorted. "What have ye to do wi' me? Gang to your ain freends and deave them!"

He could only repeat the appealing "Kirstie!"

"Kirstie, indeed!" cried the girl, her eyes blazing in her white face. "My name is Miss Christina Elliott, I would have ye to ken, and I daur ye to ca' me out of it. If I canna get love, I'll have respect, Mr. Weir. I'm come of decent people, and I'll have respect. What have I done that ye should lightly me? What have I done? What have I done? Oh, what have I done?" and her voice rose upon the third repetition. "I thocht —I thocht—I thocht I was sae happy!" and the first sob broke from her like the paroxysm of some mortal sickness.

Archie ran to her. He took the poor child in his arms, and she nestled to his breast as to a mother's, and clasped him in hands that were strong like vices. He felt her whole body shaken by the throes of distress, and had pity upon her beyond speech. Pity, and at the same time a bewildered fear of this explosive engine in his arms, whose works he did not understand, and



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yet had been tampering with. There arose from before him the curtains of boyhood, and he saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. In vain he looked back over the interview; he saw not where he had offended. It seemed unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of brute nature. . . .



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# EDITORIAL NOTE

WITH the words last printed, "a wilful convulsion of brute nature," the romance of *Weir of Hermiston* breaks off. They were dictated, I believe, on the very morning of the writer's sudden seizure and death. *Weir of Hermiston* thus remains in the work of Stevenson what *Edwin Drood* is in the work of Dickens, or *Denis Duval* in that of Thackeray: or rather it remains relatively more, for if each of those fragments holds an honourable place among its author's writings, among Stevenson's the fragment of *Weir* holds certainly the highest.

Readers may be divided in opinion on the question whether they would or they would not wish to hear more of the intended course of the story and destinies of the characters. To some, silence may seem best, and that the mind should be left to its own conjectures as to the sequel, with the help of such indications as the text affords. I confess that this is the view which has my sympathy. But since others, and those almost certainly a majority, are anxious to be told all they can, and since editors and publishers join in the request, I can scarce do otherwise than comply. The intended argument, then, so far as it was known at the time of the writer's death to his step-daughter and devoted amanuensis, Mrs. Strong, was nearly as follows:—

Archie persists in his good resolution of avoiding further conduct compromising to young Kirstie's good name. Taking advantage of the situation thus created, and of the girl's unhappiness and wounded vanity, Frank Innes pursues his purpose of seduction; and Kirstie, though still caring for Archie in her heart, allows herself to become Frank's victim. Old Kirstie is the first to perceive something amiss with her, and believing Archie to be the culprit, accuses him, thus making him aware for the first



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time that mischief has happened. He does not at once deny the charge, but seeks out and questions young Kirstie, who confesses the truth to him; and he, still loving her, promises to protect and defend her in her trouble. He then has an interview with Frank Innes on the moor, which ends in a quarrel and in Archie killing Frank beside the Weaver's Stone. Meanwhile the Four Black Brothers, having become aware of their sister's betrayal, are bent on vengeance against Archie as her supposed seducer. They are about to close in upon him with this purpose, when he is arrested by the officers of the law for the murder of Frank. He is tried before his own father, the Lord Justice-Clerk, found guilty, and condemned to death. Meanwhile the elder Kirstie, having discovered from the girl how matters really stand, informs her nephews of the truth: and they, in a great revulsion of feeling in Archie's favour, determine on an action after the ancient manner of their house. They gather a following, and after a great fight break the prison where Archie lies confined, and rescue him. He and young Kirstie thereafter escape to America. But the ordeal of taking part in the trial of his own son has been too much for the Lord Justice-Clerk, who dies of the shock. "I do not know," adds the amanuensis, "what becomes of old Kirstie, but that character grew and strengthened so in the writing that I am sure he had some dramatic destiny for her."

The plan of every imaginative work is subject, of course, to change under the artist's hand as he carries it out; and not merely the character of the elder Kirstie, but other elements of the design no less, might well have deviated from the lines originally traced. It seems certain, however, that the next stage in the relations of Archie and the younger Kirstie would have been as above foreshadowed; this conception of the lover's unconventional chivalry and unshaken devotion to his mistress after her fault is very characteristic of the author's mind. The vengeance to be taken on the seducer beside the Weaver's Stone is prepared for in the first words of the Introduction: while the situation and fate of the judge, confronting like a Brutus, but unable to survive, the duty of sending his own son to the gallows, seems clearly to have been destined to furnish the climax and essential tragedy of the tale.



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How this circumstance was to have been brought about within the limits of legal usage and social possibility, seems hard to conjecture; but it was a point to which the author had evidently given careful consideration. Mrs. Strong says simply that the Lord Justice-Clerk, like an old Roman, condemns his son to death; but I am assured on the best legal authority of Scotland, that no judge, however powerful either by character or office, could have insisted on presiding at the trial of a near kinsman of his own. The Lord Justice-Clerk was head of the criminal justiciary of the country; he might have insisted on his right of being present on the bench when his son was tried; but he would never have been allowed to preside or to pass sentence. Now in a letter of Stevenson's to Mr. Baxter, of October, 1892, I find him asking for materials in terms which seem to indicate that he knew this quite well:—"I wish Pitcairn's 'Criminal Trials,' *quam primum*. Also an absolutely correct text of the Scots judiciary oath. Also, in case Pitcairn does not come down late enough, I wish as full a report as possible of a Scots murder trial between 1790-1820. Understand, *the fullest possible*. Is there any book which would guide me to the following facts? The Justice-Clerk tries some people capitally on circuit. Certain evidence cropping up, the charge is transferred to the Justice-Clerk's own son. Of course in the next trial the Justice-Clerk is excluded, and the case is called before the Lord Justice-General. Where would this trial have to be? I fear in Edinburgh, which would not suit my view. Could it be again at the circuit town?" The point was referred to a quondam fellow-member with Stevenson of the Edinburgh Speculative Society, Mr. Graham Murray, the present Solicitor-General for Scotland, whose reply was to the effect that there would be no difficulty in making the new trial take place at the circuit town: that it would have to be held there in spring or autumn, before two Lords of Justiciary; and that the Lord Justice-General would have nothing to do with it, this title being at the date in question only a nominal one held by a layman (which is no longer the case). On this Stevenson writes, "Graham Murray's note *re* the venue was highly satisfactory, and did me all the good in the world." The terms of his inquiry seem to imply that he intended other persons, before Archie, to have fallen first under suspicion of the murder; and also—doubtless



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in order to make the rescue by the Black Brothers possible—that he wanted Archie to be imprisoned not in Edinburgh but in the circuit town. But they do not show how he meant to get over the main difficulty, which at the same time he fully recognises. Can it have been that Lord Hermiston's part was to have been limited to presiding at the *first* trial, where the evidence incriminating Archie was unexpectedly brought forward, and to directing that the law should take its course?

Whether the final escape and union of Archie and Christina would have proved equally essential to the plot may perhaps to some readers seem questionable. They may rather feel that a tragic destiny is foreshadowed from the beginning for all concerned, and is inherent in the very conditions of the tale. But on this point, and other matters of general criticism connected with it, I find an interesting discussion by the author himself in his correspondence. Writing to Mr. J. M. Barrie, under date November 1, 1892, and criticising that author's famous story, of *The Little Minister*, Stevenson says:—

"Your descriptions of your dealings with Lord Rintoul are frightfully unconscientious. . . . *The Little Minister* ought to have ended badly; we all know it *did*, and we are infinitely grateful to you for the grace and good feeling with which you have lied about it. If you had told the truth, I for one could never have forgiven you. As you had conceived and written the earlier parts, the truth about the end, though indisputably true to fact, would have been a lie, or what is worse, a discord in art. If you are going to make a book end badly, it must end badly from the beginning. Now, your book began to end well. You let yourself fall in love with, and fondle, and smile at your puppets. Once you had done that, your honour was committed —at the cost of truth to life you were bound to save them. It is the blot on *Richard Feverel* for instance, that it begins to end well; and then tricks you and ends ill. But in this case, there is worse behind, for the ill ending does not inherently issue from the plot—the story had, in fact, ended well after the great last interview between Richard and Lucy,—and the blind, illogical bullet which smashes all has no more to do between the boards than a fly has to do with a room into whose open window it comes buzzing. It might have so happened; it needed not; and unless



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needs must, we have no right to pain our readers. I have had a heavy case of conscience of the same kind about my Braxfield story. Braxfield—only his name is Hermiston—has a son who is condemned to death; plainly there is a fine tempting fitness about this—and I meant he was to hang. But on considering my minor characters, I saw there were five people who would—in a sense, who must—break prison and attempt his rescue. They are capable hardy folks too, who might very well succeed. Why should they not then? Why should not young Hermiston escape clear out of the country? and be happy, if he could, with his—but soft! I will not betray my secret nor my heroine. . . ."

To pass, now, from the question how the story would have ended to the question how it originated and grew in the writer's mind. The character of the hero, Weir of Hermiston, is avowedly suggested by the historical personality of Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield. This famous judge has been for generations the subject of a hundred Edinburgh tales and anecdotes. Readers of Stevenson's essay on the Raeburn exhibition in *Virginibus Puerisque*, will remember how he is fascinated by Raeburn's portrait of Braxfield, even as Lockhart had been fascinated by a different portrait of the same worthy sixty years before (see *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*); nor did his interest in the character diminish in later life.

Again, the case of a judge involved by the exigencies of his office in a strong conflict between public duty and private interest or affection, was one which had always attracted and exercised Stevenson's imagination. In the days when he and Mr. Henley were collaborating with a view to the stage, Mr. Henley once proposed a plot founded on the story of Mr. Justice Harbottle in Sheridan Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly*, in which the wicked judge goes headlong *per fas et nefas* to his object of getting the husband of his mistress hanged. Some time later Stevenson and his wife together wrote a play called *The Hanging Judge*. In this, the title character is tempted for the first time in his life to tamper with the course of justice, in order to shield his wife from persecution by a former husband who reappears after being supposed dead. Bulwer's novel of *Paul Clifford*, with its final situation of the worldly-minded judge, Sir William Brandon, learning that the highwayman whom he is in the act



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of sentencing is his own son, and dying of the knowledge, was also well known to Stevenson, and no doubt counted for something in the suggestion of the present story.

Once more, the difficulties often attending the relation of father and son in actual life had pressed heavily on Stevenson's mind and conscience from the days of his youth, when in obeying the law of his own nature he had been constrained to disappoint, distress, and for a time to be much misunderstood by, a father whom he justly loved and admired with all his heart. Difficulties of this kind he had already handled in a lighter vein once or twice in fiction—as for instance in the *Story of a Lie* and in *The Wrecker*—before he grappled with them in the acute and tragic phase in which they occur in the present story.

These three elements, then, the interest of the historical personality of Lord Braxfield, the problems and emotions arising from a violent conflict between duty and nature in a judge, and the difficulties due to incompatibility and misunderstanding between father and son, lie at the foundations of the present story. To touch on minor matters, it is perhaps worth notice, as Mr. Henley reminds me, that the name of Weir had from of old a special significance for Stevenson's imagination, from the traditional fame in Edinburgh of Major Weir, burned as a warlock, together with his sister, under circumstances of peculiar atrocity. Another name, that of the episodical personage of Mr. Torrance the minister, is borrowed direct from life, as indeed are the whole figure and its surroundings—kirkyard, kirk, and manse—down even to the black thread mittens: witness the following passage from a letter of the early seventies:—"I've been to church and am not depressed—a great step. It was at that beautiful church [of Glencorse in the Pentlands, three miles from his father's country home at Swanston]. It is a little cruciform place, with a steep slate roof. The small kirkyard is full of old gravestones; one of a Frenchman from Dunkerque, I suppose he died prisoner in the military prison hard by. And one, the most pathetic memorial I ever saw: a poor school-slate, in a wooden frame, with the inscription cut into it evidently by the father's own hand. In church, old Mr. Torrance preached, over eighty and a relic of times forgotten, with his black thread gloves, and mild old face." A side hint for a particular trait in the character of



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Mrs. Weir we can trace in some family traditions concerning the writer's own grandmother, who is reported to have valued piety much more than efficiency in her domestic servants. The other women characters seem, so far as his friends know, to have been pure creation, and especially that new and admirable incarnation of the eternal feminine in the elder Kirstie. The little that he says about her himself is in a letter written a few days before his death to Mr. Gosse. The allusions are to the various moods and attitudes of people in regard to middle age, and are suggested by Mr. Gosse's volume of poems, *In Russet and Silver*. "It seems rather funny," he writes, "that this matter should come up just now, as I am at present engaged in treating a severe case of middle age in one of my stories, *The Justice-Clerk*. The case is that of a woman, and I think I am doing her justice. You will be interested, I believe, to see the difference in our treatments. *Secreta Vitae* [the title of one of Mr. Gosse's poems] comes nearer to the case of my poor Kirstie." From the wonderful midnight scene between her and Archie, we may judge what we have lost in those later scenes where she was to have taxed him with the fault that was not his—to have presently learned his innocence from the lips of his supposed victim—to have then vindicated him to her kinsmen and fired them to the action of his rescue. The scene of the prison-breaking here planned by Stevenson would have gained interest (as will already have occurred to readers) from comparison with the two famous precedents in Scott, the Porteous mob, and the breaking of Portanferry Jail.

The best account of Stevenson's methods of imaginative work is in the following sentences from a letter of his own to Mr. W. Craibe Angus of Glasgow:—"I am still a 'slow study,' and sit for a long while silent on my eggs. Unconscious thought, there is the only method: macerate your subject, let it boil slow, then take the lid off and look in—and there your stuff is—good or bad." The several elements above noted having been left to work for many years in his mind, it was in the autumn of 1892 that he was moved to "take the lid off and look in,"—under the influence, it would seem, of a special and overmastering wave of that feeling for the romance of Scottish scenery and character which was at all times so strong in him, and which his exile did so much to in-



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tensify. I quote again from his letter to Mr. Barrie on November 1st in that year:—"It is a singular thing that I should live here in the South Seas under conditions so new and so striking, and yet my imagination so continually inhabit the cold old huddle of grey hills from which we come. I have finished *David Balfour*, I have another book on the stocks, *The Young Chevalier*, which is to be part in France and part in Scotland and to deal with Prince Charlie about the year 1749; and now what have I done but begun a third, which is to be all moorland together, and is to have for a centre-piece a figure that I think you will appreciate—that of the immortal Braxfield. Braxfield himself is my grand premier—or since you are so much involved in the British drama, let me say my heavy lead."

Writing to me at the same date he makes the same announcement more briefly, with a list of the characters and an indication of the scene and date of the story. To Mr. Baxter he writes a month later, "I have a novel on the stocks to be called *The Justice-Clerk*. It is pretty Scotch; the grand premier is taken from Braxfield (O, by the by, send me Cockburn's *Memorials*), and some of the story is, well, queer. The heroine is seduced by one man, and finally disappears with the other man who shot him. . . . Mind you, I expect *The Justice-Clerk* to be my masterpiece. My Braxfield is already a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, and so far as he has gone far my best character." From the last extract it appears that he had already at this date drafted some of the earlier chapters of the book. He also about the same time composed the dedication to his wife, who found it pinned to her bed-curtains one morning on awaking. It was always his habit to keep several books in progress at the same time, turning from one to another as the fancy took him, and finding rest in the change of labour; and for many months after the date of this letter, first illness,—then a voyage to Auckland,—then work on the *Ebb-Tide*, on a new tale called *St. Ives*, which was begun during an attack of influenza, and on his projected book of family history,—prevented his making any continuous progress with *Weir*. In August, 1893, he says he has been recasting the beginning. A year later, still only the first four or five chapters had been drafted. Then, in the last weeks of his life, he attacked the task again, in a sudden heat of inspiration, and worked at it



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ardently and without interruption until the end came. No wonder if during those weeks he was sometimes aware of a tension of the spirit difficult to sustain. "How can I keep this pitch?" he is reported to have said after finishing one of the chapters. To keep the pitch proved indeed beyond his strength; and that frail organism, taxed so long and so unsparingly in obedience to his indomitable will, at last betrayed him in mid effort.

There remains one more point to be mentioned, as to the speech and manners of the Hanging Judge himself. That these are not a whit exaggerated, in comparison with what is recorded of his historic prototype, Lord Braxfield, is certain. The *locus classicus* in regard to this personage is in Lord Cockburn's *Memorials of his Time*. "Strong built and dark, with rough eyebrows, powerful eyes, threatening lips, and a low growling voice, he was like a formidable blacksmith. His accent and dialect were exaggerated Scotch; his language, like his thoughts, short, strong, and conclusive. Illiterate and without any taste for any refined enjoyment, strength of understanding which gave him power without cultivation, only encouraged him to a more contemptuous disdain of all natures less coarse than his own. It may be doubted if he was ever so much in his element as when tauntingly repelling the last despairing claim of a wretched culprit, and sending him to Botany Bay or the gallows with an insulting jest. Yet this was not from cruelty, for which he was too strong and too jovial, but from cherished coarseness." Readers, nevertheless, who are at all acquainted with the social history of Scotland will hardly fail to have made the observation that Braxfield's is an extreme case of eighteenth-century manners, as he himself was an eighteenth-century personage (he died in 1799 in his seventy-eighth year); and that for the date in which the story is cast (1814) such manners are somewhat of an anachronism. During the generation contemporary with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars,—or to put it another way, the generation that elapsed between the days when Scott roamed the country as a High School and University student and those when he settled in the fulness of fame and prosperity at Abbotsford,—or again (the allusions will appeal to readers of the admirable Galt) during the intervals between the first and the last provostry of Bailie Pawkie in the borough of Gudetown, or between the earlier and the final minis-



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trations of Mr. Balwhidder in the parish of Dalmailing,—during this period a great softening had taken place in Scottish manners generally, and in those of the Bar and Bench not least. "Since the death of Lord Justice-Clerk Macqueen of Braxfield," says Lockhart, writing about 1817, "the whole exterior of judicial deportment has been quite altered." A similar criticism may probably hold good on the picture of border life contained in the chapter concerning the Four Black Brothers of Cauldstaneslap, viz., that it rather suggests the ways of an earlier generation; nor have I any clew to the reasons which led Stevenson to choose this particular date, in the year preceding Waterloo, for a story which, in regard to some of its features at least, might seem more naturally placed some twenty-five or thirty years before.

If the reader seeks, further, to know whether the scenery of Hermiston can be identified with any one special place familiar to the writer's early experience, the answer, I think, must be in the negative. Rather it is distilled from a number of different haunts and associations among the moorlands of southern Scotland. In the dedication and in a letter to me he indicates the Lammermuirs as the scene of his tragedy, and Mrs. Stevenson (his mother) tells me that she thought he was inspired by recollections of a visit paid in boyhood to an uncle living at a remote farmhouse in that district called Overshiels, in the parish of Stow. But although he may have thought of the Lammermuirs in the first instance, we have already found him drawing his description of the kirk and manse from another haunt of his youth, namely, Glencorse in the Pentlands. And passages in chapters v. and viii. point explicitly to a third district, that is, the country bordering upon Upper Tweeddale, with the country stretching thence to the headwaters of the Clyde. With this country also holiday rides and excursions from Peebles had made him familiar as a boy: and this seems certainly the most natural scene of the story, if only from its proximity to the proper home of the Elliotts, which of course is in the heart of the Border, especially Teviotdale and Ettrick. Some of the geographical names mentioned are clearly not meant to furnish literal indications. The Spango, for instance, is a water running, I believe, not into the Tweed but into the Nith, and Crossmichael as the name of a town is borrowed from Galloway; but it may be taken to all intents and purposes as



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standing for Peebles, where I am told by Sir George Douglas there existed in the early years of the century a well-known club of the same character as that described in the story. Lastly, the name of Hermiston itself is taken from a farm on the Water of Ale, between Ettrick and Teviotdale, and close to the proper country of the Elliotts.

But it is with the general and essential that the artist deals, and questions of strict historical perspective or local definition are beside the mark in considering his work. Nor will any reader expect, or be grateful for, comment in this place on matters which are more properly to the point—on the seizing and penetrating power of the author's ripened art as exhibited in the foregoing pages, the wide range of character and emotion over which he sweeps with so assured a hand, his vital poetry of vision and magic of presentment. Surely no son of Scotland has died leaving with his last breath a worthier tribute to the land he loved.

SIDNEY COLVIN.



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# GLOSSARY

ae, *one.*
antinomian, *one of a sect which holds that under the Gospel dispensation the moral law is not obligatory.*
Auld Hornie, *the Devil.*

ballant, *ballad.*
bauchles, *brogues, old shoes.*
bees in their bonnet, *eccentricities.*
birling, *whirling.*
black-a-vised, *dark-complexioned.*
bonnet-laird, *small landed proprietor, yeoman.*
bool, *ball,* technically, *marble;* here, *sugar-plum.*
brae, *rising ground.*
brig, *bridge.*
buff, play buff on, *to make a fool of, to deceive.*
burn, *stream.*
butt end, *end of a cottage.*
byre, *cow-house.*

ca', *drive.*
caller, *fresh.*
canna, *cannot.*
canny, *careful, shrewd.*
cantie, *cheerful.*
carline, *an old woman.*
chalmer, *chamber.*
claes, *clothes.*
clamjamfry, *crowd.*
clavers, *idle talk.*
cock-laird, *a yeoman.*
collieshangie, *turmoil.*
crack, *to converse.*
cuddy, *donkey.*
cuist, *cast.*
cutty, *slut.*

daft, *mad, frolicsome.*
dander, *to saunter.*
danders, *cinders.*
daurna, *dare not.*
deave, *to deafen.*
demmy brokens, *demi-broquins.*
denty, *dainty.*
dirdum, *vigour.*
disjaskit, *worn-out, disreputable-looking.*
doer, *law agent.*
dour, *hard.*
drumlie, *dark.*
dunting, *knocking.*
dule-tree, *the tree of lamentation, the hanging tree:* dule *is also Scots for boundary, and it may mean the boundary*



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*tree, the tree on which the baron hung interlopers.*
dwaibly, *infirm, rickety.*

earrand, *errand.*
ettercap, *vixen.*

fechting, *fighting.*
feck, *quantity, portion.*
feckless, *feeble, powerless.*
fell, *strong and fiery.*
fey, *unlike yourself, strange, as persons are observed to be in the hour of approaching death or disaster.*
fit, *foot.*
flit, *to depart.*
flyped, *turned up, turned inside out.*
forbye, *in addition to.*
fower, *four.*
forgather, *to fall in with.*
fule, *fool.*
fûshionless, *pithless, weak.*
fyle, *to soil, to defile.*
fylement, *obloquy, defilement.*

gaed, *went.*
gang, *to go.*
gey an', *very.*
gigot, *leg of mutton.*
girzie, lit., *diminutive of Grizel;* here, *a playful nickname.*
glaur, *mud.*
glint, *glance, sparkle.*
gloaming, *twilight.*
glower, *to scowl.*
gobbets, *small lumps.*
gowden, *golden.*
gowsty, *gusty.*
grat, *wept.*
grieve, *land-steward.*
guddle, *to catch fish with the hands by groping under the stones or banks.*
guid, *good.*
gumption, *common-sense, judgment.*
gurley, *stormy, surly.*
gyte, *beside itself.*

haddit, *held.*
hae, *have, take.*
hale, *whole.*
heels-ower-hurdie, *heels over head.*
hinney, *honey.*
hirstle, *to bustle.*
hizzie, *wench.*
howe, *hovel.*
hunkered, *crouched.*
hypothec, lit., *a term in Scots law meaning the security given by a tenant to a landlord, as furniture, produce, etc.;* by metonymy and colloquially, "*the whole structure,*" "*the whole affair.*"

idleset, *idleness.*
infeftment, *a term in Scots law originally synonymous with investiture.*

jaud, *jade.*
jeely-piece, *a slice of bread and jelly.*
jennipers, *juniper.*
jo, *sweetheart.*



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justifeed, *executed, made the victim of justice.*
jyle, *jail.*

kebbuck, *cheese.*
ken, *to know.*
kenspeckle, *conspicuous.*
kilted, *tucked up.*
kyte, *belly.*

laigh, *low.*
laird, *landed proprietor.*
lane, *alone.*
lave, *rest, remainder.*
lown, *lonely, still.*
lynn, *cataract.*
Lyon King of Armo, *the chief of the Court of Heraldry in Scotland.*

macers, *officers of the supreme court* [cf. *Guy Mannering*, last chapter].
maun, *must.*
menseful, *of good manners.*
mirk, *dark.*
misbegowk, *deception, disappointment.*
mools, *mould, earth.*
muckle, *much, great, big.*
my lane, *by myself.*

nowt, *black cattle.*

palmering, *walking infirmly.*
panel, in Scots law, *the accused person in a criminal action, the prisoner.*
peel, *a fortified watch-tower.*
plew-stilts, *plough-handles.*
policy, *ornamental grounds of a country mansion.*
puddock, *frog.*

quean, *wench.*

rair, *to roar.*
riff-raff, *rabble.*
risping, *grating.*
rowt, *to roar, to rant.*
rowth, *abundance.*
rudas, *haggard old woman.*
runt, *an old cow past breeding, opprobriously, an old woman.*

sab, *sob.*
sanguishes, *sandwiches.*
sasine, in Scots law, *the act of giving legal possession of feudal property, or, colloquially, the deed by which that possession is proved.*
sclamber, *to scramble.*
sculduddery, *impropriety, grossness.*
session, *the Court of Session, the supreme court of Scotland.*
shauchling, *shuffling.*
shoo, *to chase gently.*
siller, *money.*
sinsyne, *since then.*
skailing, *dispersing.*
skelp, *slap.*
skirling, *screaming.*
skreigh-o'-day, *daybreak.*
snash, *abuse.*
sneisty, *supercilious.*
sooth, *to hum.*
sough, *sound, murmur.*
Spec., *The Speculative Society,*



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a debating society connected with Edinburgh University.
speir, *to ask.*
speldering, *sprawling.*
splairge, *to splash.*
spunk, *spirit, fire.*
steik, *to shut.*
sugar-bool, *sugar-plum.*
syne, *since.*

tawpie, *a slow foolish slut.*
telling you, *a good thing for you.*
thir, *these.*
thrawn, *cross-grained.*
toon, *town.*
two-names, *local sobriquets in addition to patronymic.*
tyke, *dog.*

unchancy, *unlucky.*
unco, *strange, extraordinary, very.*
upsitten, *impertinent.*

vivers, *victuals.*

wae, *sad, unhappy.*
waling, *choosing.*
warrandise, *warranty.*
waur, *worse.*
weird, *destiny.*
whammle, *to upset.*
whaup, *curlew.*
windlestrae, *crested dog's-tail grass.*
wund, *wind.*

yin, *one.*



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# THE YOUNG CHEVALIER

## A FRAGMENT

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# PROLOGUE

## THE WINE-SELLER'S WIFE

THERE was a wine-seller's shop, as you went down to the river in the city of the Anti-popes. There a man was served with good wine of the country and plain country fare; and the place being clean and quiet, with a prospect on the river, certain gentlemen who dwelt in that city in attendance on a great personage made it a practice (when they had any silver in their purses) to come and eat there and be private.

They called the wine-seller Paradou. He was built more like a bullock than a man, huge in bone and brawn, high in colour, and with a hand like a baby for size. Marie-Madeleine was the name of his wife; she was of Marseilles, a city of entrancing women, nor was any fairer than herself. She was tall, being almost of a height with Paradou; full-girdled, point-device in every form, with an exquisite delicacy in the face; her nose and nostrils a delight to look at from the fineness of the sculpture, her eyes inclined a hair's-



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breadth inward, her colour between dark and fair, and laid on even like a flower's. A faint rose dwelt in it, as though she had been found unawares bathing, and had blushed from head to foot. She was of a grave countenance, rarely smiling; yet it seemed to be written upon every part of her that she rejoiced in life. Her husband loved the heels of her feet and the knuckles of her fingers; he loved her like a glutton and a brute; his love hung about her like an atmosphere; one that came by chance into the wine-shop was aware of that passion; and it might be said that by the strength of it the woman had been drugged or spell-bound. She knew not if she loved or loathed him; he was always in her eyes like something monstrous—monstrous in his love, monstrous in his person, horrific but imposing in his violence; and her sentiment swung back and forward from desire to sickness. But the mean, where it dwelt chiefly, was an apathetic fascination, partly of horror; as of Europa in mid-ocean with her bull.

On the 10th November, 1749, there sat two of the foreign gentlemen in the wine-seller's shop. They were both handsome men of a good presence, richly dressed. The first was swarthy and long and lean, with an alert, black look, and a mole upon his cheek. The other was more fair. He seemed very easy and sedate, and a little melancholy for so young a man, but his smile was charming. In his grey eyes there



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was much abstraction, as of one recalling fondly that which was past and lost. Yet there was strength and swiftness in his limbs; and his mouth set straight across his face, the under lip a thought upon side, like that of a man accustomed to resolve. These two talked together in a rude outlandish speech that no frequenter of that wine-shop understood. The swarthy man answered to the name of *Ballantrae;* he of the dreamy eyes was sometimes called *Balmile*, and sometimes *my Lord*, or *my Lord Gladsmuir;* but when the title was given him, he seemed to put it by as if in jesting, not without bitterness.

The mistral blew in the city. The first day of that wind, they say in the countries where its voice is heard, it blows away all the dust, the second all the stones, and the third it blows back others from the mountains. It was now come to the third day; outside the pebbles flew like hail, and the face of the river was puckered, and the very building-stones in the walls of houses seemed to be curdled, with the savage cold and fury of that continuous blast. It could be heard to hoot in all the chimneys of the city; it swept about the wine-shop, filling the room with eddies; the chill and gritty touch of it passed between the nearest clothes and the bare flesh; and the two gentlemen at the far table kept their mantles loose about their shoulders. The roughness of these outer hulls, for they were plain travellers' cloaks that had seen service, set the greater



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mark of richness on what showed below of their laced clothes; for the one was in scarlet and the other in violet and white, like men come from a scene of ceremony; as indeed they were.

It chanced that these fine clothes were not without their influence on the scene which followed, and which makes the prologue of our tale. For a long time Balmile was in the habit to come to the wine-shop and eat a meal or drink a measure of wine; sometimes with a comrade; more often alone, when he would sit and dream and drum upon the table, and the thoughts would show in the man's face in little glooms and lightenings, like the sun and the clouds upon a water. For a long time Marie-Madeleine had observed him apart. His sadness, the beauty of his smile when by any chance he remembered her existence and addressed her, the changes of his mind signalled forth by an abstruse play of feature, the mere fact that he was foreign and a thing detached from the local and the accustomed, insensibly attracted and affected her. Kindness was ready in her mind; it but lacked the touch of an occasion to effervesce and crystallise. Now, Balmile had come hitherto in a very poor plain habit; and this day of the mistral, when his mantle was just open, and she saw beneath it the glancing of the violet and the velvet and the silver, and the clustering fineness of the lace, it seemed to set the man in a new light, with which he shone resplendent to her fancy.



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The high inhuman note of the wind, the violence and continuity of its outpouring, and the fierce touch of it upon man's whole periphery, accelerated the functions of the mind. It set thoughts whirling, as it whirled the trees of the forest; it stirred them up in flights, as it stirred up the dust in chambers. As brief as sparks, the fancies glittered and succeeded each other in the mind of Marie-Madeleine; and the grave man with the smile, and the bright clothes under the plain mantle, haunted her with incongruous explanations. She considered him the unknown, the speaker of an unknown tongue, the hero (as she placed him) of an unknown romance, the dweller upon unknown memories. She recalled him sitting there alone, so immersed, so stupefied; yet she was sure he was not stupid. She recalled one day when he had remained a long time motionless, with parted lips, like one in the act of starting up, his eyes fixed on vacancy. Any one else must have looked foolish; but not he. She tried to conceive what manner of memory had thus entranced him; she forged for him a past; she showed him to herself in every light of heroism and greatness and misfortune; she brooded with petulant intensity on all she knew and guessed of him. Yet, though she was already gone so deep, she was still unashamed, still unalarmed; her thoughts were still disinterested; she had still to reach the stage at which —beside the image of that other whom we love



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to contemplate and to adorn—we place the image of ourself and behold them together with delight.

She stood within the counter, her hands clasped behind her back, her shoulders pressed against the wall, her feet braced out. Her face was bright with the wind and her own thoughts; as a fire in a similar day of tempest glows and brightens on a hearth, so she seemed to glow, standing there, and to breathe out energy. It was the first time Ballantrae had visited that wine-seller's, the first time he had seen the wife; and his eyes were true to her.

"I perceive your reason for carrying me to this very draughty tavern," he said at last.

"I believe it is propinquity," returned Balmile.

"You play dark," said Ballantrae, "but have a care! Be more frank with me, or I will cut you out. I go through no form of qualifying my threat, which would be commonplace and not conscientious. There is only one point in these campaigns: that is the degree of admiration offered by the man; and to our hostess I am in a posture to make victorious love."

"If you think you have the time, or the game worth the candle," replied the other, with a shrug.

"One would suppose you were never at the pains to observe her," said Ballantrae.

"I am not very observant," said Balmile. "She seems comely."



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"You very dear and dull dog!" cried Ballantrae; "chastity is the most besotting of the virtues. Why, she has a look in her face beyond singing! I believe, if you were to push me hard, I might trace it home to a trifle of a squint. What matters? The height of beauty is in the touch that's wrong, that's the modulation in a tune. 'Tis the devil we all love; I owe many a conquest to my mole"—he touched it as he spoke with a smile, and his eyes glittered; "we are all hunchbacks, and beauty is only that kind of deformity that I happen to admire. But come! Because you are chaste, for which I am sure I pay you my respects, that is no reason why you should be blind. Look at her, look at the delicious nose of her, look at her cheek, look at her ear, look at her hand and wrist—look at her whole baggage from heels to crown, and tell me if she wouldn't melt on a man's tongue."

As Ballantrae spoke, half jesting, half enthusiastic, Balmile was constrained to do as he was bidden. He looked at the woman, admired her excellences, and was at the same time ashamed for himself and his companion. So it befell that when Marie-Madeleine raised her eyes, she met those of the subject of her contemplations fixed directly on herself with a look that is unmistakable, the look of a person measuring and valuing another,—and, to clench the false impression, that his glance was instantly and guiltily withdrawn. The blood beat back upon her heart



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and leaped again; her obscure thoughts flashed clear before her; she flew in fancy straight to his arms like a wanton, and fled again on the instant like a nymph. And at that moment there chanced an interruption, which not only spared her embarrassment, but set the last consecration on her now articulate love.

Into the wine-shop there came a French gentleman, arrayed in the last refinement of the fashion, though a little tumbled by his passage in the wind. It was to be judged he had come from the same formal gathering at which the others had preceded him; and perhaps that he had gone there in the hope to meet with them, for he came up to Ballantrae with unceremonious eagerness.

"At last, here you are!" he cried in French. "I thought I was to miss you altogether."

The Scotsmen rose, and Ballantrae, after the first greetings, laid his hand on his companion's shoulder.

"My Lord," said he, "allow me to present to you one of my best friends and one of our best soldiers, the Lord Viscount Gladsmuir."

The two bowed with the elaborate elegance of the period.

"*Monseigneur*," said Balmile, "*je n'ai pas la prétention de m' affubler d'un titre que la mauvaise fortune de mon roi ne me permet pas de porter comme il sied. Je m'appelle, pour vous servir, Blair de Balmile tout court.*" ("My Lord, I have not



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the effrontery to cumber myself with a title which the ill fortunes of my king will not suffer me to bear the way it should be. I call myself, at your service, plain Blair of Balmile.")

"*Monsieur le Vicomte ou Monsieur Blèr' de Balmaïl,*" replied the new-comer, "*le nom n'y fait rien, et l'on connaît vos beaux faits.*" ("The name matters nothing; your gallant actions are known.")

A few more ceremonies, and these three, sitting down together to the table, called for wine. It was the happiness of Marie-Madeleine to wait unobserved upon the prince of her desires. She poured the wine, he drank of it; and that link between them seemed to her, for the moment, close as a caress. Though they lowered their tones, she surprised great names passing in their conversation, names of kings, the names of de Gesvre and Belle-Isle; and the man who dealt in these high matters, and she who was now coupled with him in her own thoughts, seemed to swim in mid-air in a transfiguration. Love is a crude core, but it has singular and far-reaching fringes; in that passionate attraction for the stranger that now swayed and mastered her, his harsh incomprehensible language and these names of grandees in his talk, were each an element.

The Frenchman stayed not long, but it was plain he left behind him matter of much interest to his companions; they spoke together earnestly, their heads down, the woman of the wine-shop



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totally forgotten; and they were still so occupied when Paradou returned.

This man's love was unsleeping. The even bluster of the mistral, with which he had been combating some hours, had not suspended, though it had embittered, that predominant passion. His first look was for his wife, a look of hope and suspicion, menace and humility and love, that made the over-blooming brute appear for the moment almost beautiful. She returned his glance, at first as though she knew him not, then with a swiftly waxing coldness of intent; and at last, without changing their direction, she had closed her eyes.

There passed across her mind during that period much that Paradou could not have understood had it been told to him in words: chiefly the sense of an enlightening contrast betwixt the man who talked of kings and the man who kept a wine-shop, betwixt the love she yearned for and that to which she had been long exposed like a victim bound upon the altar. There swelled upon her, swifter than the Rhone, a tide of abhorrence and disgust. She had succumbed to the monster, humbling herself below animals; and now she loved a hero, aspiring to the semi-divine. It was in the pang of that humiliating thought that she had closed her eyes.

Paradou—quick, as beasts are quick, to translate silence—felt the insult through his blood; his inarticulate soul bellowed within him for re-



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venge. He glanced about the shop. He saw the two indifferent gentlemen deep in talk, and passed them over: his fancy flying not so high. There was but one other present, a country lout who stood swallowing his wine, equally unobserved by all and unobserving; to him he dealt a glance of murderous suspicion, and turned direct upon his wife. The wine-shop had lain hitherto, a space of shelter, the scene of a few ceremonial passages and some whispered conversation, in the howling river of the wind; the clock had not yet ticked a score of times since Paradou's appearance; and now, as he suddenly gave tongue, it seemed as though the mistral had entered at his heels.

"What ails you, woman?" he cried, smiting on the counter.

"Nothing ails me," she replied. It was strange; but she spoke and stood at that moment like a lady of degree, drawn upward by her aspirations.

"You speak to me, by God, as though you scorned me!" cried the husband.

The man's passion was always formidable; she had often looked on upon its violence with a thrill—it had been one ingredient in her fascination; and she was now surprised to behold him, as from afar off, gesticulating but impotent. His fury might be dangerous like a torrent or a gust of wind, but it was inhuman; it might be feared or braved, it should never be respected. And



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with that there came in her a sudden glow of courage and that readiness to die which attends so closely upon all strong passions.

"I do scorn you," she said.

"What is that?" he cried.

"I scorn you," she repeated, smiling.

"You love another man!" said he.

"With all my soul," was her reply.

The wine-seller roared aloud so that the house rang and shook with it.

"Is this the——?" he cried, using a foul word, common in the South; and he seized the young countryman and dashed him to the ground. There he lay for the least interval of time insensible; thence fled from the house, the most terrified person in the county. The heavy measure had escaped from his hands, splashing the wine high upon the wall. Paradou caught it. "And you?" he roared to his wife, giving her the same name in the feminine, and he aimed at her the deadly missile. She expected it, motionless, with radiant eyes.

But before it sped, Paradou was met by another adversary, and the unconscious rivals stood confronted. It was hard to say at that moment which appeared the more formidable. In Paradou, the whole muddy and truculent depths of the half-man were stirred to frenzy; the lust of destruction raged in him; there was not a feature in his face but it talked murder. Balmile had dropped his cloak: he shone out at



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once in his finery, and stood to his full stature; girt in mind and body; all his resources, all his temper, perfectly in command; in his face the light of battle. Neither spoke; there was no blow nor threat of one; it was war reduced to its last element, the spiritual; and the huge wine-seller slowly lowered his weapon. Balmile was a noble, he a commoner; Balmile exulted in an honourable cause. Paradou already perhaps began to be ashamed of his violence. Of a sudden, at least, the tortured brute turned and fled from the shop, in the footsteps of his former victim, to whose continued flight his reappearance added wings.

So soon as Balmile appeared between her husband and herself, Marie-Madeleine transferred to him her eyes. It might be her last moment, and she fed upon that face; reading there inimitable courage and illimitable valour to protect. And when the momentary peril was gone by, and the champion turned a little awkwardly towards her whom he had rescued, it was to meet, and quail before, a gaze of admiration more distinct than words. He bowed, he stammered, his words failed him; he who had crossed the floor a moment ago, like a young god, to smite, returned like one discomfited: got somehow to his place by the table, muffled himself again in his discarded cloak, and for a last touch of the ridiculous, seeking for anything to restore his countenance, drank of the wine before him,



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deep as a porter after a heavy lift. It was little wonder if Ballantrae, reading the scene with malevolent eyes, laughed out loud and brief, and drank with raised glass, "To the champion of the Fair."

Marie-Madeleine stood in her old place within the counter; she disdained the mocking laughter; it fell on her ears, but it did not reach her spirit. For her, the world of living persons was all resumed again into one pair, as in the days of Eden; there was but the one end in life, the one hope before her, the one thing needful, the one thing possible,—to be his.



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# CHAPTER I

## THE PRINCE

THAT same night there was in the city of Avignon a young man in distress of mind. Now he sat, now walked in a high apartment, full of draughts and shadows. A single candle made the darkness visible; and the light scarce sufficed to show upon the wall, where they had been recently and rudely nailed, a few miniatures and a copper medal of the young man's head. The same was being sold that year in London to admiring thousands. The original was fair; he had beautiful brown eyes, a beautiful bright open face; a little feminine, a little hard, a little weak; still full of the light of youth, but already beginning to be vulgarised; a sordid bloom come upon it, the lines coarsened with a touch of puffiness. He was dressed, as for a gala, in peach-colour and silver; his breast sparkled with stars and was bright with ribbons; for he had held a levee in the afternoon and received a distinguished personage incognito. Now he sat with a bowed head, now walked precipitately to and fro, now went and gazed from the uncur-



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tained window, where the wind was still blowing, and the lights winked in the darkness.

The bells of Avignon rose into song as he was gazing; and the high notes and the deep tossed and drowned, boomed suddenly near or were suddenly swallowed up, in the current of the mistral. Tears sprang in the pale blue eyes; the expression of his face was changed to that of a more active misery; it seemed as if the voices of the bells reached, and touched and pained him, in a waste of vacancy where even pain was welcome. Outside in the night they continued to sound on, swelling and fainting; and the listener heard in his memory, as it were, their harmonies, joy-bells clashing in a northern city, and the acclamations of a multitude, the cries of battle, the gross voices of cannon, the stridor of an animated life. And then all died away, and he stood face to face with himself in the waste of vacancy, and a horror came upon his mind, and a faintness on his brain, such as seizes men upon the brink of cliffs.

On the table, by the side of the candle, stood a tray of glasses, a bottle, and a silver bell. He went thither swiftly, then his hand lowered first above the bell, then settled on the bottle. Slowly he filled a glass, slowly drank it out; and, as a tide of animal warmth recomforted the recesses of his nature, stood there smiling at himself. He remembered he was young; the funeral curtains rose, and he saw his life shine and broaden and



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flow out majestically, like a river sunward. The smile still on his lips, he lit a second candle, and a third; a fire stood ready built in a chimney, he lit that also; and the fir-cones and the gnarled olive billets were swift to break in flame and to crackle on the hearth, and the room brightened and enlarged about him like his hopes. To and fro, to and fro, he went, his hands lightly clasped, his breath deeply and pleasurably taken. Victory walked with him; he marched to crowns and empires among shouting followers; glory was his dress. And presently again the shadows closed upon the solitary. Under the gilt of flame and candle-light, the stone walls of the apartment showed down bare and cold; behind the depicted triumph loomed up the actual failure: defeat, the long distress of the flight, exile, despair, broken followers, mourning faces, empty pockets, friends estranged. The memory of his father rose in his mind: he, too, estranged and defied; despair sharpened into wrath. There was one who had led armies in the field, who had staked his life upon the family enterprise, a man of action and experience, of the open air, the camp, the court, the council-room; and he was to accept direction from an old, pompous gentleman in a home in Italy, and buzzed about by priests? A pretty king, if he had not a martial son to lean upon! A king at all?

"There was a weaver (of all people) joined me



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at St. Ninians; he was more of a man than my papa!" he thought. "I saw him lie doubled in his blood and a grenadier below him—and he died for my papa! All died for him, or risked the dying, and I lay for him all those months in the rain and skulked in heather like a fox; and now he writes me his advice! calls me Carluccio—me, the man of the house, the only king in that king's race!" He ground his teeth. "The only king in Europe! Who else? Who has done and suffered except me? who has lain and run and hidden with his faithful subjects, like a second Bruce? Not my accursed cousin, Louis of France, at least, the lewd effeminate traitor!" And filling the glass to the brim, he drank a king's damnation. Ah, if he had the power of Louis, what a king were here!

The minutes followed each other into the past, and still he persevered in this debilitating cycle of emotions, still fed the fire of his excitement with driblets of Rhine wine; a boy at odds with life, a boy with a spark of the heroic, which he was now burning out and drowning in futile reverie and solitary excess.

From two rooms beyond, the sudden sound of a raised voice attracted him.

"By . . .



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# EDITORIAL NOTE

THE first suggestion for the story of which the above is the opening was received by the author from Mr. Andrew Lang. It is mentioned in *Vailima Letters* under date January 3, 1892. Writing of the subject again on March 25 of the same year, Mr. Stevenson speculates on the title to be chosen and the turn the plot is to take; and later again, towards the end of May, announces that he has written the first "prologuial episode," that namely, which the reader has now before him. "There are only four characters," he observes: "Francis Blair of Balmile (Jacobite Lord Gladsmuir), my hero; the Master of Ballantrae; Paradou, a wine-seller of Avignon; Marie-Madeleine, his wife. These last two I am now done with, and I think they are successful, and I hope I have Balmile on his feet; and the style seems to be found. It is a little charged and violent; sins on the side of violence; but I think will carry the tale. I think it is a good idea so to introduce my hero, being made love to by an episodic woman." If the reader will turn to the passage, he will find more about the intended developments of the story, which was to hinge on the rescue by the Prince of a young lady from a fire at an inn, and to bring back upon the scene not only the Master of Ballantrae, but one of the author's and his readers' favourite characters, Alan Breck. Mr. Lang has been good enough to furnish the following interesting notes as to its origin:

"The novel of *The Young Chevalier*," writes Mr. Lang, "of which only the fragment here given exists, was based on a suggestion of my own. But it is plain that Mr. Stevenson's purpose differed widely from my crude idea. In reading the curious *Tales of the Century* (1847), by 'John Sobieski Holberg Stuart and Charles Edward Stuart,' I had been struck by a long essay on Prince Charles's mysterious incognito. Expelled from



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France after the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, His Royal Highness, in December, 1748, sought refuge in the papal city of Avignon, whence, annoyed by English remonstrances with the Vatican, he vanished in the last days of February, 1749. The Jacobite account of his secret adventures is given in a little romance, purporting to be a 'Letter from Henry Goring,' his equerry, brother of Sir Charles Goring. I had a transcript made from this rather scarce old pamphlet, and sent it to Mr. Stevenson, in Samoa. According to the pamphlet (which is perfectly untrustworthy) a mysterious stranger, probably meant for the Earl Marischal, came to Avignon. There came too, an equally mysterious Scottish exile. Charles eloped in company with Henry Goring (which is true), joined the stranger, travelled to a place near Lyons, and thence to Strasbourg, which is probable. Here he rescued from a fire a lovely girl, travelling alone, and disdained to profit by her sudden passion for 'le Comte d'Espoir,' his travelling-name. Moving into Germany, he was attacked by assassins, headed by the second mysterious stranger, a Scottish spy; he performs prodigies of valour. He then visits foreign courts, Berlin being indicated, and wins the heart of a lady, probably the Princess Radziwill, whom he is to marry when his prospects improve. All or much of this is false. Charles really visited Paris, by way of Dijon, and Mme. de Talmont; thence he went to Venice. But the stories about Berlin and the Polish marriage were current at the time among bewildered diplomatists.[1]

"My idea was to make the narrator a young Scottish Jacobite at Avignon. He was to be sent by Charles to seek an actual hidden treasure—the fatal gold of the hoard buried at Loch Arkaig a few days after Culloden. He was to be a lover of Miss Clementina Walkinshaw, who later played the part of Beatrix Esmond to the Prince.

"Mr. Stevenson liked something in the notion, to which he refers in his *Vailima Letters*. He told me that Alan Breck and the Master of Ballantrae were to appear in the tale. I sent him such books about Avignon as I could collect, and he also made inquiries about Mandrin, the famous French brigand. Shortly before his death, I sent him transcripts of the unpublished letters

[1] The real facts, as far as known, are given in *Pickle the Spy*.—[A. L.]



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of his old friend, James More Macgregor, and of Pickle the Spy, from the Pelham MSS. in the British Museum. But these, I think, arrived too late for his perusal. In Pickle he would have found some one not very unlike his Ballantrae. The fragment, as it stands, looks as if the Scottish assassin and the other mysterious stranger were not to appear, or not so early as one had supposed. The beautiful woman of the inn and her surly husband (Mandrin?) were inventions of his own. Other projects superseded his interest in this tale, and deprived us of a fresh view of Alan Breck. His dates, as indicated in the fragment, are not exact; and there is no reason to believe that Charles's house at Avignon (that of the de Rochefort family) was dismantled and comfortless, as here represented.

"Mr. Stevenson made, as was his habit, a list of chapter headings, which I unluckily did not keep. One, I remember, was 'Ballantrae to the Rescue,' of whom or of what did not appear. It is impossible to guess how the story would have finally shaped itself in his fancy. One naturally regrets what we have lost, however great the compensation in the works which took the place of the sketch. Our Prince Charles of romance must remain the Prince of *Waverley* and the King of *Redgauntlet*. No other hand now can paint him in the adventurous and mysterious years of 1749-59. Often, since Mr. Stevenson's death, in reading Jacobite MSS. unknown to me or to any one when the story was planned, I have thought, 'He could have done something with this,' or 'This would have interested him.' *Eheu!*"

SIDNEY COLVIN.



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# HEATHERCAT

## A FRAGMENT

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# PART I

# THE KILLING-TIME

## I

### TRAQUAIRS OF MONTROYMONT

THE period of this tale is in the heat of the *killing-time;* the scene laid for the most part in solitary hills and morasses, haunted only by the so-called Mountain Wanderers, the dragoons that came in chase of them, the women that wept on their dead bodies, and the wild birds of the moorland that have cried there since the beginning. It is a land of many rain-clouds; a land of much mute history, written there in prehistoric symbols. Strange green raths are to be seen commonly in the country, above all by the kirkyards; barrows of the dead, standing stones; beside these, the faint, durable footprints and handmarks of the Roman; and an antiquity older perhaps than any, and still living and active—a complete Celtic nomenclature and a scarce-mingled Celtic population. These rugged and grey hills were once included in the boundaries of the Caledonian Forest. Merlin sat here below his apple-tree and lamented Gwendolen; here spoke with Kentigern; here fell into his



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enchanted trance. And the legend of his slumber seems to body forth the story of that Celtic race, deprived for so many centuries of their authentic speech, surviving with their ancestral inheritance of melancholy perversity and patient, unfortunate courage.

The Traquairs of Montroymont (*Mons Romanus*, as the erudite expound it) had long held their seat about the head waters of the Dule and in the back parts of the moorland parish of Balweary. For two hundred years they had enjoyed in these upland quarters a certain decency (almost to be named distinction) of repute; and the annals of their house, or what is remembered of them, were obscure and bloody. Ninian Traquair was "cruallie slochtered" by the Crozers at the kirk-door of Balweary, anno 1482. Francis killed Simon Ruthven of Drumshoreland, anno 1540; bought letters of slayers at the widow and heir, and, by a barbarous form of compounding, married (without tocher) Simon's daughter Grizzel, which is the way the Traquairs and Ruthvens came first to an intermarriage. About the last Traquair and Ruthven marriage, it is the business of this book, among many other things, to tell.

The Traquairs were always strong for the Covenant; for the King also, but the Covenant first; and it began to be ill days for Montroymont when the Bishops came in and the dragoons at the heels of them. Ninian (then laird) was



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an anxious husband of himself and the property, as the times required, and it may be said of him that he lost both. He was heavily suspected of the Pentland Hills rebellion. When it came the length of Bothwell Brig, he stood his trial before the Secret Council, and was convicted of talking to some insurgents by the wayside, the subject of the conversation not very clearly appearing, and of the reset and maintenance of one Gale, a gardener-man, who was seen before Bothwell with a musket, and afterwards, for a continuance of months, delved the garden at Montroymont. Matters went very ill with Ninian at the Council; some of the lords were clear for treason; and even the boot was talked of. But he was spared that torture; and at last, having pretty good friendship among great men, he came off with a fine of seven thousand marks, that caused the estate to groan. In this case, as in so many others, it was the wife that made the trouble. She was a great keeper of conventicles; would ride ten miles to one, and when she was fined, rejoiced greatly to suffer for the Kirk; but it was rather her husband that suffered. She had their only son, Francis, baptised privately by the hands of Mr. Kidd; there was that much the more to pay for! She could neither be driven nor wiled into the parish kirk; as for taking the sacrament at the hands of any Episcopalian curate, and tenfold more at those of Curate Haddo, there was nothing further from



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her purposes; and Montroymont had to put his hand in his pocket month by month and year by year. Once, indeed, the little lady was cast in prison, and the laird, worthy, heavy, uninterested man, had to ride up and take her place; from which he was not discharged under nine months and a sharp fine. It scarce seemed she had any gratitude to him; she came out of jail herself, and plunged immediately deeper in conventicles, resetting recusants, and all her old, expensive folly, only with greater vigour and openness, because Montroymont was safe in the Tolbooth and she had no witness to consider. When he was liberated and came back, with his fingers singed, in December, 1680, and late in the black night, my lady was from home. He came into the house at his alighting, with a riding-rod yet in his hand; and, on the servant-maid telling him, caught her by the scruff of the neck, beat her violently, flung her down in the passageway, and went up-stairs to his bed fasting and without a light. It was three in the morning when my lady returned from that conventicle, and, hearing of the assault (because the maid had sat up for her, weeping), went to their common chamber with a lantern in hand and stamping with her shoes so as to wake the dead; it was supposed, by those that heard her, from a design to have it out with the goodman at once. The house-servants gathered on the stair, because it was a main interest with them to know which



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of these two was the better horse; and for the space of two hours they were heard to go at the matter, hammer and tongs. Montroymont alleged he was at the end of his possibilities; it was no longer within his power to pay the annual rents; she had served him basely by keeping conventicles while he lay in prison for her sake; his friends were weary, and there was nothing else before him but the entire loss of the family lands, and to begin life again by the wayside as a common beggar. She took him up very sharp and high: called upon him, if he were a Christian? and which he most considered, the loss of a few dirty, miry glebes, or of his soul? Presently he was heard to weep, and my lady's voice to go on continually like a running burn, only the words indistinguishable; whereupon it was supposed a victory for her ladyship, and the domestics took themselves to bed. The next day Traquair appeared like a man who had gone under the harrows; and his lady wife thenceforward continued in her old course without the least deflection.

Thenceforward Ninian went on his way without complaint, and suffered his wife to go on hers without remonstrance. He still minded his estate, of which, it might be said, he took daily a fresh farewell, and counted it already lost; looking ruefully on the acres and the graves of his fathers, on the moorlands where the wildfowl consorted, the low, gurgling pool of the



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trout, and the high, windy place of the calling curlews—things that were yet his for the day and would be another's to-morrow; coming back again, and sitting ciphering till the dusk at his approaching ruin, which no device of arithmetic could postpone beyond a year or two. He was essentially the simple ancient man, the farmer and landholder; he would have been content to watch the seasons come and go, and his cattle increase, until the limit of age; he would have been content at any time to die, if he could have left the estates undiminished to an heir male of his ancestors, that duty standing first in his instinctive calendar. And now he saw everywhere the image of the new proprietor come to meet him, and go sowing and reaping, or fowling for his pleasure on the red moors, or eating the very gooseberries in the Place garden; and saw always, on the other hand, the figure of Francis go forth, a beggar, into the broad world.

It was in vain the poor gentleman sought to moderate; took every test and took advantage of every indulgence; went and drank with the dragoons in Balweary; attended the communion and came regularly to the church to Curate Haddo, with his son beside him. The mad, raging, Presbyterian zealot of a wife at home made all of no avail; and indeed the house must have fallen years before if it had not been for the secret indulgence of the curate, who had a great sympathy with the laird, and winked hard at the



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doings in Montroymont. This curate was a man very ill reputed in the country-side, and indeed in all Scotland. "Infamous Haddo" is Shield's expression. But Patrick Walker is more copious. "Curate Hall Haddo," says he, *sub voce* Peden, "or *Hell* Haddo as he was more justly to be called, a pokeful of old condemned errors and the filthy lusts of the flesh, a published whoremonger, a common gross drunkard, continually and godlessly scraping and skirling on a fiddle, continually breathing flames against the remnant of Israel. But the Lord put an end to his piping, and all these offences were composed into one bloody grave." No doubt this was written to excuse his slaughter; and I have never heard it claimed for Walker that he was either a just witness or an indulgent judge. At least, in a merely human character, Haddo comes off not wholly amiss in the matter of these Traquairs: not that he showed any graces of the Christian, but had a sort of pagan decency, which might almost tempt one to be concerned about his sudden, violent, and unprepared fate.



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## CHAPTER II

### FRANCIE

FRANCIE was eleven years old, shy, secret, and rather childish of his age, though not backward in schooling, which had been pushed on far by a private governor, one M'Brair, a forfeited minister harboured in that capacity at Montroymont. The boy, already much employed in secret by his mother, was the most apt hand conceivable to run upon a message, to carry food to lurking fugitives, or to stand sentry on the sky-line above a conventicle. It seemed no place on the moorlands was so naked but what he would find cover there; and as he knew every hag, boulder, and heatherbush in a circuit of seven miles about Montroymont, there was scarce any spot but what he could leave or approach it unseen. This dexterity had won him a reputation in that part of the country; and among the many children employed in these dangerous affairs, he passed under the by-name of Heathercat.

How much his father knew of this employment might be doubted. He took much forethought



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for the boy's future, seeing he was like to be left so poorly, and would sometimes assist at his lessons, sighing heavily, yawning deep, and now and again patting Francie on the shoulder if he seemed to be doing ill, by way of a private, kind encouragement. But a great part of the day was passed in aimless wanderings with his eyes sealed, or in his cabinet sitting bemused over the particulars of the coming bankruptcy; and the boy would be absent a dozen times for once that his father would observe it.

On the 2nd of July, 1682, the boy had an errand from his mother, which must be kept private from all, the father included in the first of them. Crossing the braes, he hears the clatter of a horse's shoes, and claps down incontinent in a hag by the wayside. And presently he spied his father come riding from one direction, and Curate Haddo walking from another; and Montroymont leaning down from the saddle, and Haddo getting on his toes (for he was a little, ruddy, bald-pated man, more like a dwarf), they greeted kindly, and came to a halt within two fathoms of the child.

"Montroymont," the curate said, "the de'il 's in 't but I'll have to denunciate your leddy again."

"De'il 's in 't indeed!" says the laird.

"Man! can ye no induce her to come to the kirk?" pursues Haddo; "or to a communion at the least of it. For the conventicles, let be!



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and the same for yon solemn fule, M'Brair: I can blink at them. But she's got to come to the kirk, Montroymont."

"Dinna speak of it," says the laird. "I can do nothing with her."

"Couldn't ye try the stick to her? It works wonders whiles," suggested Haddo. "No? I'm wae to hear it. And I suppose ye ken where you're going?"

"Fine!" said Montroymont. "Fine do I ken where: Bankrup'cy and the Bass Rock!"

"Praise to my bones that I never married!" cried the curate. "Well, it's a grievous thing to me to see an auld house dung down that was here before Flodden Field. But naebody can say it was with my wish."

"No more they can, Haddo!" says the laird. "A good friend ye've been to me, first and last. I can give you that character with a clear conscience."

Whereupon they separated, and Montroymont rode briskly down into the Dule Valley. But of the curate Francie was not to be quit so easily. He went on with his little, brisk steps to the corner of a dyke, and stopped and whistled and waved upon a lassie that was herding cattle there. This Janet M'Clour was a big lass, being taller than the curate; and what made her look the more so, she was kilted very high. It seemed for a while she would not come, and Francie heard her calling Haddo a "daft auld fule," and



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saw her running and dodging him among the whins and hags till he was fairly blown. But at the last he gets a bottle from his plaid-neuk and holds it up to her; whereupon she came at once into a composition, and the pair sat, drinking of the bottle, and daffing and laughing together, on a mound of heather. The boy had scarce heard of these vanities, or he might have been minded of a nymph and satyr, if anybody could have taken long-leggit Janet for a nymph. But they seemed to be huge friends, he thought; and was the more surprised, when the curate had taken his leave, to see the lassie fling stones after him with screeches of laughter, and Haddo turn about and caper, and shake his staff at her, and laugh louder than herself. A wonderful merry pair, they seemed; and when Francie crawled out of the hag, he had a great deal to consider in his mind. It was possible they were all fallen in error about Mr. Haddo, he reflected,—having seen him so tender with Montroymont, and so kind and playful with the lass Janet; and he had a temptation to go out of his road and question her herself upon the matter. But he had a strong spirit of duty on him; and plodded on instead over the braes till he came near the House of Cairngorm. There, in a hollow place by the burn-side that was shaded by some birks, he was aware of a barefoot boy, perhaps a matter of three years older than himself. The two approached with the precautions of



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a pair of strange dogs, looking at each other queerly.

"It's ill weather on the hills," said the stranger, giving the watchword.

"For a season," said Francie, "but the Lord will appear."

"Richt," said the barefoot boy. "Wha're ye frae?"

"The Leddy Montroymont," says Francie.

"Ha'e then!" says the stranger, and handed him a folded paper, and they stood and looked at each other again. "It's unco' het," said the boy.

"Dooms het," says Francie.

"What do they ca' ye?" says the other.

"Francie," says he. "I'm young Montroymont. They ca' me Heathercat."

"I'm Jock Crozer," said the boy. And there was another pause, while each rolled a stone under his foot.

"Cast your jaiket and I'll fecht ye for a bawbee," cried the elder boy, with sudden violence, and dramatically throwing back his jacket.

"Na, I have nae time the now," said Francie, with a sharp thrill of alarm, because Crozer was much the heavier boy.

"Ye're feared. Heathercat indeed!" said Crozer, for among this infantile army of spies and messengers the fame of Crozer had gone forth and was resented by his rivals. And with that they separated.

On his way home Francie was a good deal



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occupied with the recollection of this untoward incident. The challenge had been fairly offered and basely refused: the tale would be carried all over the country, and the lustre of the name of Heathercat be dimmed. But the scene between Curate Haddo and Janet M'Clour had also given him much to think of; and he was still puzzling over the case of the curate, and why such ill words were said of him, and why, if he were so merry-spirited, he should yet preach so dry, when, coming over a knowe, whom should he see but Janet, sitting with her back to him, minding her cattle! He was always a great child for secret, stealthy ways, having been employed by his mother on errands when the same was necessary; and he came behind the lass without her hearing.

"Jennet," says he.

"Keep me!" cries Janet, springing up. "O, it's you, Maister Francie! Save us, what a fricht ye gied me!"

"Ay, it's me," said Francie. "I've been thinking, Jennet; I saw you and the curate a while back——"

"Brat!" cried Janet, and coloured up crimson; and the one moment made as if she would have stricken him with a ragged stick she had to chase her bestial with, and the next was begging and praying that he would mention it to none. It was "naebody's business, whatever," she said; "it would just start a clash in the country";



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and there would be nothing left for her but to drown herself in Dule Water.

"Why?" says Francie.

The girl looked at him and grew scarlet again.

"And it isna that, anyway," continued Francie. "It was just that he seemed so good to ye—like our Father in Heaven, I thought; and I thought that mebbe, perhaps, we had all been wrong about him from the first. But I'll have to tell Mr. M'Brair, I'm under a kind of a bargain to him to tell him all."

"Tell it to the divil if ye like for me!" cried the lass. "I've naething to be ashamed of. Tell M'Brair to mind his ain affairs," she cried again; "they'll be hot eneuch for him, if Haddie likes!" And so strode off, shoving her beasts before her, and ever and again looking back and crying angry words to the boy, where he stood mystified.

By the time he had got home his mind was made up that he would say nothing to his mother. My Lady Montroymont was in the keeping-room, reading a godly book; she was a wonderful frail little wife to make so much noise in the world and be able to steer about that patient sheep her husband; her eyes were like sloes, the fingers of her hands were like tobacco-pipe shanks, her mouth shut tight like a trap; and even when she was the most serious, and still more when she was angry, there hung about her face the terrifying semblance of a smile.



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"Have ye gotten the billet, Francie?" said she; and when he had handed it over, and she had read and burned it, "Did you see anybody?" she asked.

"I saw the laird," said Francie.

"He didna see you, though?" asked his mother.

"De'il a fear," from Francie.

"Francie!" she cried. "What's that I hear? an aith? The Lord forgive me, have I broughten forth a brand for the burning, a fagot for hell-fire?"

"I'm very sorry, ma'am," said Francie. "I humbly beg the Lord's pardon, and yours, for my wickedness."

"H'm," grunted the lady. "Did ye see nobody else?"

"No, ma'am," said Francie, with the face of an angel, "except Jock Crozer, that gied me the billet."

"Jock Crozer!" cried the lady. "I'll Crozer them! Crozers indeed! What next? Are we to repose the lives of a suffering remnant in Crozers? The whole clan of them wants hanging, and if I had my way of it, they wouldna want it long. Are you aware, sir, that these Crozers killed your forebear at the kirk-door?"

"You see, he was bigger 'n me," said Francie.

"Jock Crozer," continued the lady. "That'll be Clement's son, the biggest thief and reiver in the country-side. To trust a note to him! But I'll give the benefit of my opinions to Lady



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Whitecross when we two forgather. Let her look to herself! I have no patience with half-hearted carlines, that complies on the Lord's day morning with the kirk, and comes taigling the same night to the conventicle. The one or the other! is what I say: Hell or Heaven—Haddie's abominations or the pure word of God dreeping from the lips of Mr. Arnot.

"'Like honey from the honeycomb
That dreepeth, sweeter far.'"

My lady was now fairly launched, and that upon two congenial subjects: the deficiencies of the Lady Whitecross, and the turpitudes of the whole Crozer race—which, indeed, had never been conspicuous for respectability. She pursued the pair of them for twenty minutes on the clock with wonderful animation and detail, something of the pulpit manner, and the spirit of one possessed. "O hellish compliance!" she exclaimed. "I would not suffer a complier to break bread with Christian folk. Of all the sins of this day there is not one so God-defying, so Christ-humiliating, as damnable compliance"; the boy standing before her meanwhile, and brokenly pursuing other thoughts, mainly of Haddo and Janet, and Jock Crozer stripping off his jacket. And yet, with all his distraction, it might be argued that he heard too much; his father and himself being "compliers"—that is



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to say, attending the church of the parish as the law required.

Presently, the lady's passion beginning to decline or her flux of ill words to be exhausted, she dismissed her audience. Francie bowed low, left the room, closed the door behind him; and then turned him about in the passageway, and with a low voice, but a prodigious deal of sentiment, repeated the name of the evil one twenty times over, to the end of which, for the greater efficacy, he tacked on "damnable" and "hellish." *Fas est ab hoste doceri*—disrespect is made more pungent by quotation; and there is no doubt but he felt relieved, and went up-stairs into his tutor's chamber with a quiet mind. M'Brair sat by the cheek of the peat-fire and shivered, for he had a quartan ague, and this was his day. The great nightcap and plaid, the dark unshaven cheeks of the man, and the white, thin hands that held the plaid about his chittering body, made a sorrowful picture. But Francie knew and loved him; came straight in, nestled close to the refugee, and told his story. M'Brair had been at the College with Haddo; the Presbytery had licensed both on the same day; and at this tale, told with so much innocency by the boy, the heart of the tutor was commoved.

"Woe upon him! Woe upon that man!" he cried. "O the unfaithful shepherd! O the hireling and apostate minister! Make my matters hot for me? quo' she! the shameless limmer!



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And true it is that he could repose me in that nasty, stinking hole, the Canongate Tolbooth, from which your mother drew me out—the Lord reward her for it!—or to that cold, unbieldy, marine place of the Bass Rock, which, with my delicate kist, would be fair ruin to me. But I will be valiant in my Master's service. I have a duty here: a duty to my God, to myself, and to Haddo: in His strength, I will perform it."

Then he straightly discharged Francie to repeat the tale, and bade him in the future to avert his very eyes from the doings of the curate. "You must go to his place of idolatry; look upon him there!" says he, "but nowhere else. Avert your eyes, close your ears, pass him by like a three days' corp'. He is like that damnable monster Basiliscus, which defiles—yea, poisons! —by the sight." All which was hardly claratory to the boy's mind.

Presently Montroymont came home, and called up the stairs to Francie. Traquair was a good shot and swordsman; and it was his pleasure to walk with his son over the braes of the moorfowl, or to teach him arms in the back court, when they made a mighty comely pair, the child being so lean and light and active, and the laird himself a man of a manly, pretty stature, his hair (the periwig being laid aside) showing already white with many anxieties, and his face of an even, flaccid red. But this day Francie's heart was not in the fencing.



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"Sir," says he, suddenly lowering his point, "will ye tell me a thing if I was to ask it?"

"Ask away," says the father.

"Well, it's this," said Francie: "Why do you and me comply if it's so wicked?"

"Ay, ye have the cant of it, too!" cries Montroymont. "But I'll tell ye for all that. It's to try and see if we can keep the rigging on this house, Francie. If she had her way, we would be beggar-folk and hold our hands out by the wayside. When ye hear her—when ye hear folk," he corrected himself briskly, "call me a coward, and one that betrayed the Lord, and I kenna what else, just mind it was to keep a bed to ye to sleep in and a bite for ye to eat.—On guard!" he cried, and the lesson proceeded again till they were called to supper.

"There's another thing yet," said Francie, stopping his father. "There's another thing that I am not sure I am very caring for. She—she sends me errands."

"Obey her, then, as is your bounden duty," said Traquair.

"Ay, but wait till I tell ye," says the boy. "If I was to see you I was to hide."

Montroymont sighed. "Well, and that's good of her, too," said he. "The less that I ken of thir doings the better for me; and the best thing you can do is just to obey her, and see and be a good son to her, the same as ye are to me, Francie."

At the tenderness of this expression the heart



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of Francie swelled within his bosom, and his remorse was poured out. "Faither!" he cried, "I said 'de'il' to-day; many's the time I said it, and '*damnable*' too, and '*hellitsh.*' I ken they're all right; they're beeblical. But I didna say them beeblically; I said them for sweir-words—that's the truth of it."

"Hout, ye silly bairn!" said the father; "dinna do it nae mair, and come in by to your supper." And he took the boy, and drew him close to him a moment, as they went through the door, with something very fond and secret, like a caress between a pair of lovers.

The next day M'Brair was abroad in the afternoon, and had a long advising with Janet on the braes where she herded cattle. What passed was never wholly known; but the lass wept bitterly, and fell on her knees to him among the whins. The same night, as soon as it was dark, he took the road again for Balweary. In the Kirkton, where the dragoons quartered, he saw many lights, and heard the noise of a ranting song and people laughing grossly, which was highly offensive to his mind. He gave it the wider berth, keeping among the fields; and came down at last by the water-side, where the manse stands solitary between the river and the road. He tapped at the back door, and the old woman called upon him to come in, and guided him through the house to the study, as they still called it, though there was little enough study



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there in Haddo's days, and more song-books than theology.

"Here's yin to speak wi' ye, Mr. Haddie!" cries the old wife.

And M'Brair, opening the door and entering, found the little, round, red man seated in one chair and his feet upon another. A clear fire and a tallow dip lighted him barely. He was taking tobacco in a pipe, and smiling to himself; and a brandy-bottle and glass, and his fiddle and bow, were beside him on the table.

"Hech, Patey M'Brair, is this you?" said he, a trifle tipsily. "Step in by, man, and have a drop brandy: for the stomach's sake! Even the de'il can quote Scripture—eh, Patey?"

"I will neither eat nor drink with you," replied M'Brair. "I am come upon my Master's errand: woe be upon me if I should anyways mince the same. Hall Haddo, I summon you to quit this kirk which you encumber."

"Muckle obleeged!" says Haddo, winking.

"You and me have been to kirk and market together," pursued M'Brair: "we have had blessed seasons in the kirk, we have sat in the same teaching-rooms and read in the same book; and I know you still retain for me some carnal kindness. It would be my shame if I denied it; I live here at your mercy and by your favour, and glory to acknowledge it. You have pity on my wretched body, which is but grass, and must soon be trodden under; but O, Haddo!



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how much greater is the yearning with which I yearn after and pity your immortal soul! Come now, let us reason together! I drop all points of controversy, weighty though these be; I take your defaced and damnified kirk on your own terms; and I ask you, Are you a worthy minister? The communion season approaches; how can you pronounce thir solemn words, 'The elders will now bring forrit the elements,' and not quail? A parishioner may be summoned to-night; you may have to rise from your miserable orgies; and I ask you, Haddo, what does your conscience tell you? Are you fit? Are you fit to smooth the pillow of a parting Christian? And if the summons should be for yourself, how then?"

Haddo was startled out of all composure and the better part of his temper. "What's this of it?" he cried. "I'm no waur than my neebours. I never set up to be speeritual; I never did. I'm a plain, canty creature; godliness is cheerfulness, says I; give me my fiddle and a dram, and I wouldna hairm a flee."

"And I repeat my question," said M'Brair: "Are you fit—fit for this great charge? Fit to carry and save souls?"

"Fit? Blethers! As fit's yoursel'," cried Haddo.

"Are you so great a self-deceiver?" said M'Brair. "Wretched man, trampler upon God's covenants, crucifier of your Lord afresh! I will



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ding you to the earth with one word: How about the young woman, Janet M'Clour?"

"Well, what about her? what do I ken?" cries Haddo. "M'Brair, ye daft auld wife, I tell ye as true's truth, I never meddled her. It was just daffing, I tell ye: daffing, and nae mair: a piece of fun, like! I'm no' denying but what I'm fond of fun, sma' blame to me! But for onything sarious—hout, man, it might come to a deposeetion! I'll sweir it to ye. Where's a Bible, till you hear me sweir?"

"There is nae Bible in your study," said M'Brair severely.

And Haddo, after a few distracted turns, was constrained to accept the fact.

"Weel, and suppose there isna?" he cried, stamping. "What mair can ye say of us, but just that I'm fond of my joke, and so's she? I declare to God, by what I ken, she might be the Virgin Mary—if she would just keep clear of the dragoons. But me! na, de'il haet o' me!"

"She is penitent at least," says M'Brair.

"Do you mean to actually up and tell me to my face that she accused me?" cried the curate.

"I canna just say that," replied M'Brair. "But I rebuked her in the name of God, and she repented before me on her bended knees."

"Weel, I daursay she's been ower far' wi' the dragoons," said Haddo. "I never denied that. I ken naething by it."

"Man, you but show your nakedness the more



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plainly," said M'Brair. "Poor, blind, besotted creature—and I see you stoitering on the brink of dissolution: your light out, and your hours numbered. Awake, man!" he shouted with a formidable voice, "awake, or it be ower late."

"Be damned if I stand this!" exclaimed Haddo, casting his tobacco-pipe violently on the table, where it was smashed in pieces. "Out of my house with ye, or I'll call for the dragoons."

"The speerit of the Lord is upon me," said M'Brair, with solemn ecstasy. "I sist you to compear before the Great White Throne, and I warn you the summons shall be bloody and sudden."

And at this, with more agility than could have been expected, he got clear of the room and slammed the door behind him in the face of the pursuing curate. The next Lord's day the curate was ill, and the kirk closed, but for all his ill words, Mr. M'Brair abode unmolested in the house of Montroymont.



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## CHAPTER III

### THE HILL-END OF DRUMLOWE

THIS was a bit of a steep broken hill that overlooked upon the west a moorish valley, full of ink-black pools. These presently drained into a burn that made off, with little noise and no celerity of pace, about the corner of the hill. On the far side the ground swelled into a bare heath, black with junipers, and spotted with the presence of the standing stones for which the place was famous. They were many in that part, shapeless, white with lichen—you would have said with age; and had made their abode there for untold centuries, since first the heathens shouted for their installation. The ancients had hallowed them to some ill religion, and their neighbourhood had long been avoided by the prudent before the fall of day; but of late, on the upspringing of new requirements, these lonely stones on the moor had again become a place of assembly. A watchful picket on the Hill-end commanded all the northern and eastern approaches; and such was the disposition of the ground, that by certain cunningly posted sen-



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tries the west also could be made secure against surprise: there was no place in the country where a conventicle could meet with more quiet of mind or a more certain retreat open, in the case of interference from the dragoons. The minister spoke from a knowe close to the edge of the Ring, and poured out the words God gave him on the very threshold of the devils of yore. When they pitched a tent (which was often in wet weather, upon a communion occasion) it was rigged over the huge isolated pillar that has the name of Anes-Errand, none knew why. And the congregation sat partly clustered on the slope below, and partly among the idolatrous monoliths and on the turfy soil of the Ring itself. In truth the situation was well qualified to give a zest to Christian doctrines, had there been any wanted. But these congregations assembled under conditions at once so formidable and romantic as made a zealot of the most cold. They were the last of the faithful; God, who had averted His face from all other countries of the world, still leaned from Heaven to observe, with swelling sympathy, the doings of His moorland remnant; Christ was by them with His eternal wounds, with dropping tears; the Holy Ghost (never perfectly realised nor firmly adopted by Protestant imaginations) was dimly supposed to be in the heart of each and on the lips of the minister. And over against them was the army of the hierarchies, from the men Charles and



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James Stuart, on to King Lewie and the Emperor; and the scarlet Pope, and the muckle black devil himself, peering out the red mouth of hell in an ecstasy of hate and hope. "One pull more!" he seemed to cry; "one pull more, and it's done. There's only Clydesdale and the Stewartry, and the three Bailieries of Ayr, left for God." And with such an august assistance of powers and principalities looking on at the last conflict of good and evil, it was scarce possible to spare a thought to those old, infirm, debile *ab agendo* devils whose holy place they were now violating.

There might have been three hundred to four hundred present. At least there were three hundred horse tethered for the most part in the Ring; though some of the hearers on the outskirts of the crowd stood with their bridles in their hand, ready to mount at the first signal. The circle of faces was strangely characteristic; long, serious, strongly marked, the tackle standing out in the lean brown cheeks, the mouth set and the eyes shining with a fierce enthusiasm; the shepherd, the labouring man, and the rarer laird, stood there in their broad blue bonnets or laced hats, and presenting an essential identity of type. From time to time a long-drawn groan of adhesion rose in this audience, and was propagated like a wave to the outskirts, and died away among the keepers of the horses. It had a name; it was called "a holy groan."



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A squall came up; a great volley of flying mist went out before it and whelmed the scene; the wind stormed with a sudden fierceness that carried away the minister's voice and twitched his tails and made him stagger, and turned the congregation for a moment into a mere pother of blowing plaid-ends and prancing horses; and the rain followed and was dashed straight into their faces. Men and women panted aloud in the shock of that violent shower-bath; the teeth were bared along all the line in an involuntary grimace; plaids, mantles, and riding-coats were proved vain, and the worshippers felt the water stream on their naked flesh. The minister, reinforcing his great and shrill voice, continued to contend against and triumph over the rising of the squall and the dashing of the rain.

"In that day ye may go thirty mile and not hear a crawing cock," he said; "and fifty mile and not get a light to your pipe; and an hundred mile and not see a smoking house. For there'll be naething in all Scotland but deid men's banes and blackness, and the living anger of the Lord. O, where to find a bield—O sirs, where to find a bield from the wind of the Lord's anger? Do ye call *this* a wind? Be thankit! Sirs, this is but a temporary dispensation; this is but a puff of wind, this is but a spit of rain and by with it. Already there's a blue bow in the west, and the sun will take the crown of the causeway again, and your things'll be dried upon ye, and your



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flesh will be warm upon your bones. But O, sirs, sirs! for the day of the Lord's anger!"

His rhetoric was set forth with an ear-piercing elocution, and a voice that sometimes crashed like cannon. Such as it was, it was the gift of all hill-preachers, to a singular degree of likeness or identity. Their images scarce ranged beyond the red horizon of the moor and the rainy hill-top, the shepherd and his sheep, a fowling-piece, a spade, a pipe, a dunghill, a crowing cock, the shining and the withdrawal of the sun. An occasional pathos of simple humanity, and frequent patches of big biblical words, relieved the homely tissue. It was a poetry apart; bleak, austere, but genuine, and redolent of the soil.

A little before the coming of the squall there was a different scene enacting at the outposts. For the most part the sentinels were faithful to their important duty; the Hill-end of Drumlowe was known to be a safe meeting-place; and the out-pickets on this particular day had been somewhat lax from the beginning, and grew laxer during the inordinate length of the discourse. Francie lay there in his appointed hiding-hole, looking abroad between two whin-bushes. His view was across the course of the burn, then over a piece of plain moorland, to a gap between two hills; nothing moved but grouse, and some cattle who slowly traversed his field of view, heading northward: he heard the psalms, and sang words of his own to the savage



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and melancholy music; for he had his own design in hand, and terror and cowardice prevailed in his bosom alternately, like the hot and the cold fit of an ague. Courage was uppermost during the singing, which he accompanied through all its length with this impromptu strain:

"And I will ding Jock Crozer down
No later than the day."

Presently the voice of the preacher came to him in wafts, at the wind's will, as by the opening and shutting of a door; wild spasms of screaming, as of some undiscerned gigantic hill-bird stirred with inordinate passion, succeeded to intervals of silence; and Francie heard them with a critical ear. "Ay," he thought at last, "he'll do; he has the bit in his mou' fairly."

He had observed that his friend, or rather his enemy, Jock Crozer, had been established at a very critical part of the line of outposts; namely, where the burn issues by an abrupt gorge from the semicircle of high moors. If anything was calculated to nerve him to battle it was this. The post was important; next to the Hill-end itself, it might be called the key to the position; and it was where the cover was bad, and in which it was most natural to place a child. It should have been Heathercat's; why had it been given to Crozer? An exquisite fear of what should be the answer passed through his marrow every time he faced the question. Was it possible



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that Crozer could have boasted? that there were rumours abroad to his—Heathercat's—discredit? that his honour was publicly sullied? All the world went dark about him at the thought; he sank without a struggle into the midnight pool of despair; and every time he so sank, he brought back with him—not drowned heroism indeed, but half-drowned courage by the locks. His heart beat very slowly as he deserted his station, and began to crawl towards that of Crozer. Something pulled him back, and it was not the sense of duty, but a remembrance of Crozer's build and hateful readiness of fist. Duty, as he conceived it, pointed him forward on the rueful path that he was travelling. Duty bade him redeem his name if he were able, at the risk of broken bones; and his bones and every tooth in his head ached by anticipation. An awful subsidiary fear whispered him that if he were hurt, he should disgrace himself by weeping. He consoled himself, boy-like, with the consideration that he was not yet committed; he could easily steal over unseen to Crozer's post, and he had a continuous private idea that he would very probably steal back again. His course took him so near the minister that he could hear some of his words: "What news, minister, of Claver'se? He's going round like a roaring, rampaging lion . . .



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# EDITORIAL NOTE

THE story, which opens with these scenes of covenanting life and character in Scotland, was intended to shift presently across the Atlantic, first to the Carolina plantations, and next to the ill-fated Scotch settlement in Darien. Practically all that we know of it is contained in one or two passages of letters from the author to Mr. Charles Baxter and Mr. S. R. Crockett. To Mr. Baxter he writes as follows:

"6 Decr., 1893.

"'Oct. 25, 1685, at Privy Council, George Murray, Lieutenant of the King's Guard, and others, did, on the 21 of September last, obtain a clandestine order of Privy Council to apprehend the person of Janet Pringle, daughter to the late Clifton, and she having retired out of the way upon information, he got an order against Andrew Pringle, her uncle, to produce her. . . . But she having married Andrew Pringle, her uncle's son (to disappoint all their designs of selling her), a boy of 13 years old'—but my boy is 14, so I extract no farther (*Fountainhall, i. 320*). May 6, 1685, Wappus Pringle of Clifton was still alive after all,[1] and in prison for debt, and transacts with Lieutenant Murray, giving security for 7000 marks (i. 320).

"My dear Charles, the above is my story, and I wonder if any light can be thrown on it. I prefer the girl's father dead; and the question is how in that case could Lieutenant George Murray get his order to apprehend and his power to sell her in marriage? Or . . . might Lieutenant G. be her tutor, and the fugitive to the Pringles, and on the discovery of her whereabouts hastily married? A good legal note on these points is

[1] No; it seems to have been *her* brother who had succeeded.



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very ardently desired by me; it will be the corner-stone of my novel.

"This is for—I am quite wrong to tell you, for you will tell others and nothing will teach you that all my schemes are in the air, and vanish and re-appear again like shapes in the clouds—it is for *Heathercat;* whereof the first volume will be called *The Killing Time;* and I believe I have authorities ample for that. But the second volume is to be called, I believe, *Darien,* and for that I want, I fear, a good deal of truck.

Darien papers,
Carstairs papers,
Marchmont papers,
Jerviswood correspondence—

I hope may do me; some sort of general history of the Darien affair (if there is a decent one, which I misdoubt) it would also be well to have; the one with most details, if possible. It is singular how obscure to me this decade of Scots History remains, 1690-1700: a deuce of a want of light and grouping to it. However, I believe I shall be mostly out of Scotland in my tale; first in Carolina and next in Darien."

The place of Andrew Pringle, in the historical extract above quoted, was evidently to be taken in Stevenson's story by Ninian Traquair of Montroymont. In a rough draft of chapter headings, chap. vi. bears the title, "The Ward Comes Home"; another chapter shows that her name was to have been Jean Ruthven; plainly Francie Traquair was to be the boy-husband to whom this Jean was to be united in order to frustrate the designs of those who hoped to control her person and traffic in her marriage.

The references in the author's letters to Mr. Crockett date from June 30, 1893, and afterwards. His correspondent was about this time engaged in preparing a covenanting romance of his own—*The Men of the Moss-Hags.* On the first-named date Stevenson writes: "It may interest you to know that *Weir of Hermiston,* or *The Hanging Judge,* or whatever the mischief the thing is to be called, centres about the grave of the Praying Weaver of Balweary. And when *Heathercat* is written, if it



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ever is, O, then there will be another chance for the Societies" (i. e., the United Societies, generally known in history as the Cameronians). A little later Stevenson received from the same correspondent, at his own request, materials for his work in the shape of extracts collected from the Earlston papers by the Rev. John Anderson, Assistant Curator of the Historical Department, Register House, Edinburgh; the minutes of the Societies, edited by the Rev. John Howie of Lochgoin, entitled "Faithful Contendings," etc., etc. Later, he sends a humorous sketch of a trespassing board and gallows, with R. L. S. in the act of hanging S. R. C., and on the board the words: "Notice—The Cameronians are the proppaty of me, R. L. S.—trespassers and Raiders will be hung." In the letter accompanying this, he says: "I have made many notes for *Heathercat*, but do not get much forrader. For one thing, I am not inside these people yet. Wait three years and *I'll race you*. For another thing, I am not a keen partisan, and to write a good book you must be. The Society men were brave, dour-headed, strong-hearted men fighting a hard battle and fighting it hardly. That is about all the use I have for them." Finally, in a letter written shortly before his death, he mentions having laid the story on the shelf, whether permanently or only for a while he does not know.

SYDNEY COLVIN.



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